

**THE PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES OF  
IMPLEMENTING PEER MEDIATION SERVICES IN  
SCHOOLS: A CULTURAL-HISTORICAL ACTIVITY  
THEORY APPROACH  
BY  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is concerned with the analysis of processes of implementing peer mediation services for interpersonal conflict resolution in schools and outcomes attributable to this intervention. To illuminate such an analysis, the thesis argues the utility of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). This argument is based on the need for a theoretical approach that conceptualises processes of social and individual transformation, including the structure of the social world and the creation of new possibilities for thinking and acting in its analysis. Concepts from CHAT are elaborated to give greater description of I) the principles of power and control underpinning alternative models of activity, and II) different forms of conflict.

The thesis analyses the implementation of a peer mediation service at one school undergoing transformation and at eight others where peer mediation has been implemented in the past with mixed success. Despite limitations regarding some of the data collection tools chosen, interview data highlights that those schools where principles of power and control are modified to give pupils greater responsibilities in the regulation of their peers' conflicts, produce new mediational tools that expand the range of possible actions available to individuals in conflict.

## DEDICATION

There are places I'll remember  
All my life though some have changed  
Some forever not for better  
Some have gone and some remain  
All these places have their moments  
With lovers and friends I still can recall  
Some are dead and some are living  
In my life I've loved them all

(Lennon & McCartney)

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## **TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS**

BCC	Birmingham City Council
CHAT	Cultural-Historical Activity Theory/Activity Theory
DES	Department for Education and Science
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
EBD	Emotional and behavioural difficulties
LEA	Local Education Authority
OfSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PHSE	Personal, Health and Social Education
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
WMQPEP	West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY COMMENTARY**

### **1.1 Foreword**

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the impact of peer mediation services upon interpersonal conflict resolution in schools. Chapter one introduces peer mediation and how access to such services being implemented in schools will be gained. It also outlines the personal motivation and educational rationale underpinning the selection of this topic for research. This rationale is based upon the potentially constructive and destructive characteristics and outcomes of conflict and the argument that children can be taught strategies to resolve conflict constructively. The final section of chapter one presents an overview of the thesis, showing how the research question is developed alongside advances in the writer's understanding of the topic and its study. To develop and answer the research question, Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is adopted as an approach to conceptualise processes of individual and social transformation. The reasons for this choice are introduced in chapter one, then elaborated and critiqued in later chapters.

### **1.2 Peer mediation**

#### *1.2.1 What is peer mediation?*

Peer mediation in schools is commonly a structured process (Cohen 1995, Stacey 1996, Sellman 2002, Tyrell and Farrell 1995). It offers pupils experiencing a problem, dispute or conflict (referred to as 'conflict' here on) the opportunity to reach a mutually satisfying outcome facilitated by neutral third-parties from amongst their peers. Peer mediators are impartial; they only insist that certain ground rules are kept to. These typically include



listening to each other without interrupting and avoiding the use of blaming language. Under the guidance of peer mediators, disputants explore their conflict, each other's wants, needs and feelings and participate in generating potential solutions from which to agree a resolution. The process is voluntary and both disputants must want to solve their conflict for it to be successful. Greater detail about peer mediation, its history and research base is presented in chapter two.

### *1.2.2 Access to peer mediation services being implemented in schools*

Peer mediators are usually trained by specialists from training agencies. Mediation UK, the umbrella organisation for mediation services throughout the country, keeps a database of agencies providing such training to schools. To gain access to a number of local schools where peer mediation services either exist or are being implemented, the West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project (WMQPEP) was contacted. WMQPEP was initially set up in the 1980s in response to visits to schools by the armed services. Its aim was to provide a pool of local Quakers who were prepared to speak in schools on alternatives to violence and war. Since then, the project has developed to provide classroom-based activities in conflict resolution skills and peer mediation training, delivered by professionals. Thus, WMQPEP provides a means of access to peer mediation services being implemented in several schools. This means of access has implications for research design and the manner in which peer mediation services in schools are selected for investigation. These issues will be discussed in chapters three and six.

### *1.2.3 Peer mediation and levels of analysis*

By studying the impact of peer mediation training provided by WMQPEP upon interpersonal conflict resolution in schools, the writer is also studying the relationship

between different levels of analysis: the individual, the school and the training agency. In doing so, there is an emphasis on at least two levels of potential conflict: I) between the innovative practice of peer mediation as an intervention and the current practices of schools, and II) the impact of implementing the service on the resolution of interpersonal conflicts. Such a study requires careful reflection regarding how the relationship between individuals and social structures are theorised. A key component of this thesis is a search for an approach that theorises the relationship between the activity of conflict resolution in school and an alternative model of activity: peer mediation. Particularly, how the structure of the former may be transformed by the latter to expand the range of possible thoughts and actions available to individuals in conflict. CHAT is selected, critiqued and elaborated to provide such a theoretical approach, which subsequently informs the development of a research question, empirical research design, analysis and conclusions drawn. Greater detail about this choice will be introduced in section 1.4 and extended in chapters three to five.

Before an overview of the thesis is presented, the personal motivation and educational rationale underpinning the selection of ‘peer mediation and conflict resolution’ as a topic for research is outlined.

### **1.3 Motivation and rationale**

The selection of ‘peer mediation and conflict resolution’ as a topic for research has a personal motivation, described in section 1.3.1. This is underpinned by being witness to the damaging effects of school bullying and a belief that conflict is best resolved peacefully. Hence, the positionality of the writer is built upon a commitment to non-violent conflict resolution. ‘Positionality’ refers to the manner in which a writer’s background, attributes, personal history and values shape the research process (Clough and Nutbrown 2002). Clearly, any writer’s positionality brings into question the prospect of objectivity and impartiality brought to an investigation. Declaring such a motivation is

the first step in making the reader aware of the position the writer is arguing from. However, a critical edge is brought to the thesis by its research design, scholarship and the fact that the writer is as interested in situations where peer mediation fails, so that greater understanding about the longevity of such interventions can be achieved.

There is also an educational rationale for teaching children conflict resolution skills. This is based on the argument that conflict is associated with both destructive and constructive characteristics and outcomes (Deutsch 1969, Rawlings 1998) and research that shows children can learn how to resolve conflict constructively (e.g. Johnson and Johnson 1996). Hence, development in this area is a worthy educational goal. These sets of arguments are outlined in section 1.3.2.

### *1.3.1 Personal motivation*

Dear Teacher,  
 I am the survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness:  
 Gas chambers built by learned engineers.  
 Children poisoned by educated physicians.  
 Infants killed by trained nurses.  
 Women and babies shot and burned by high school graduates.  
 So I am suspicious of education.  
 My request is:  
 Help your students become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more human.

The letter above, cited by Harber (2002b), makes an appeal for an education greater than the transmission of knowledge alone. It advocates that the acquisition of knowledge and skills must be accompanied by values underpinned by a concern for the welfare of all humanity. Goleman (1996) makes a similar appeal when arguing for ‘emotional intelligence’ as an educational priority. To illustrate his point, Goleman (1996, p.231) quotes a teacher from a Brooklyn school where a conflict between pupils resulted in a

shooting; “we care more about how well school children can read and write than whether they’ll be alive next week”. Fortunately, the writer has not witnessed such acts of extreme violence but his view of education is consistent. This view is built upon two motives. First, over the course of the writer’s childhood and adolescence he observed the damaging effects of bullying at school and is hence interested in how schools manage pupil welfare. Second, as a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) the writer believes that conflict is best resolved peacefully and these skills should be taught in schools. Both of these motives are central to the selection of ‘peer mediation and conflict resolution’ as a topic for research.

### *1.3.2 Educational rationale*

#### *a) Conflict can be destructive and constructive*

According to Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff (1981),

social scientists are divided on the question whether social conflict should be regarded as something rational, constructive, and socially functional or something irrational, pathological, and socially dysfunctional.

(Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff 1981, p.187)

A review of literature regarding conflict completed for this thesis highlights that conflict has both constructive and destructive characteristics and outcomes (Burton and Dukes 1990, Deutsch 1969, Isenhardt and Spangle 2000, Johnson and Johnson 1994, Valsiner and Cairns 1992). Katz and Lawyer (1993) and Rawlings (1996) discuss the constructive and destructive features of conflicts experienced by children at school specifically. Synthesis of these features indicate that the characteristics of constructive conflicts are:

- when it presents opportunities for learning or improved efficiency,
- develops the skills of communication,

- opens up important issues or highlights problems,
- develops trust, and
- relieves anxiety, suspicion and stress.

Features of destructive conflicts are:

- when it creates fear or neurosis,
- lowers confidence, self esteem and security,
- diverts energy from more important issues,
- destroys creativity,
- entrenches attitudes, and
- causes aggressive or violent behaviour which may lead to personal harm or injury to oneself or others.

The destructive effects of conflict at school can be long term. For example, those bullied at school are also those at greatest risk of having low self-esteem and becoming school phobics (Balding 1996, Billingham 1989, Redwood 1996). A longitudinal study by Rigby (1999) showed that pupils who reported being bullied and victimised at school were more likely to have poorer physical and mental health than their peers three years later. Long-term effects of bullying were found on the mental health of females but not males. This might be explained by the verbal as opposed to physical nature reported in female bullying and the more devastating nature of mental violence. Teachers' management of pupils frequently concentrates upon children's externalised behaviour (Daniels, Cole, Visser and de Reybekill 1998), which may neglect the occurrence of 'mental violence' between pupils. The lack of visible evidence for mental violence and the potentially large number of cases falling into this category may exacerbate such neglect (Collier 1995).

Valsiner and Cairns (1992) have indicated that much of the literature on conflict has concentrated upon its destructive aspects and its elimination or avoidance. Yet, conflict can both facilitate as well as obstruct development. Subsequently, there has been a growing recognition that conflict can serve some useful functions when managed

effectively (e.g. Johnson and Johnson 1994). Many educationalists (e.g. Cohen 1995, Hicks 1988, 1999, 2001, Katz and Lawyer 1993, 1994, Johnson and Johnson 1994, 1996, Stacey 1996) advocate that children can be taught how to harness the potentially constructive aspects of conflict to develop their own skills, improve relationships and learn how to resolve opposing stances peacefully.

*b) Children can and should be taught conflict resolution skills*

The argument for education to develop the knowledge, skills and values, which underpin peaceful conflict resolution has a longstanding, albeit polemical, past (Hicks 1988). Whereas the idea of striving for peace in human relations predates history, the specific concept of 'educating for peace' emerged in the 1970s. Hicks (1988) attributes the establishment of Peace Education to the union of three traditions: libertarian education, personal growth and education for international understanding. Peace Education has however met much resistance. This was particularly the case in the 1980s, when the field was politically associated with anti-nuclear issues (Stacey, Robinson and Cremin 1997, Vriens 1997).

There are many other educational initiatives that advocate the teaching of conflict resolution skills in schools. These include anti-bullying schemes (Smith and Sharp 1994), developing cooperative groups (Bennett and Dunne 1995, Stanford 1990), circle time (Mosley 1993, 1996), a multitude of pupil empowerment initiatives (Bentley 1996), and more recently, Citizenship (Clough and Holden 2002). However, the explicit teaching of conflict resolution skills remains an absentee from many schools' educational agendas (Leimdorfer 1995). Branco (2001) makes a similar observation,

in schools, teachers and educators do not traditionally give the same attention and careful planning to the development of social goals as they do for cognitive goals. In this secondary role, child social development has become primarily an issue of the so-called 'hidden curriculum' of schools... rather than a special educational goal requiring well-designed activities.

(Branco 2001 p. 107)

Goleman (1996), Griffith (1996), Kohlberg (1980), Smith and Sharp (1994) and Stacey (1996) argue that conflict in schools is more often seen as a management issue rather than an opportunity for learning and development. These writers describe incidents where issues of conflict are either ignored or arbitrated by adults, who apply quick fix solutions. This does little to either resolve the issues that culminated in the conflict or develop the skills of those involved. In such educational climates, children may learn how to flee, gain adult assistance or even fight their way out of a conflict but learn little about how to actually 'resolve' a conflict in a mutually satisfying way (Isenhardt and Spangle 2000). Such an education discourages children from taking responsibility for their own behaviour (Leimdorfer 1995) and is reminiscent of the warning from Illich (1971) that social institutions, including schools, perpetuate myths that only external bodies can regulate processes such as learning and behaviour.

One of the underlying assumptions about debate on this topic is the existence of a relationship between education and violent or non-violent approaches to conflict in wider society. Some theorists emphasise that schools produce violence in society and need radical organisational and pedagogical transformation (e.g. Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997, Salisbury and Jackson 1996). Whereas others emphasise that education reproduces violence from society in schools, which needs challenging (e.g. Josephson 1987, Kniveton 1986). The relationship between human development and social structures is the subject of careful reflection when selecting a theoretical approach for this thesis in chapter three. As outlined in chapters three and four, CHAT posits a dialectical relationship between individuals and social structures (Engestrom 1999a). Thus, schools are theorised as having the potential to both produce and reproduce violent or non-violent approaches to conflict, as recognised by the Gulbenkian Foundation (1995) and Peterson and Skiba (2001). In addressing their relationship to conflict and violence in society schools cannot be seen as sole agents for affecting change and nor can they expected to be. However, Cohen (1995, p.6) states, '...just as schools can be a part of the solution if they institute necessary reforms, they can be part of the problem if they do not'.

Programmes in schools, which have attempted to develop conflict resolution skills, have resulted in tentative but encouraging social and academic gains (e.g. Johnson and Johnson 1996, Stacey 1996). For example, Johnson and Johnson (1996) have shown that pupils in the United States trained as peer mediators do acquire and retain skills some time after training and their 'employment' is associated with a decrease in pupil-pupil conflicts referred to teachers for arbitration. 'Promoting Social Competence' (2002), a project based at Dundee University argues that if the characteristics of effective teaching in such social skills can be identified, they are as basic to each child's entitlement as more traditional subjects. The argument that children can learn conflict resolution skills is the subject of further discussion in chapter two.

#### **1.4 Developing a research question and an epistemological position**

Commencing a thesis marks the beginning of an intellectual journey. This involves developing i) a specific research question, ii) an understanding of what is already known on the subject, iii) the design of approaches and tools to add to this knowledge, from which iv) conclusions will be made (Clough and Nutbrown 2002). The journey outlined by this thesis shows the development of the writer's ontological conception of human behaviour and epistemological understanding regarding its scientific investigation. Decisions are made along the way, which affect the course of the study. A critical commentary accompanying the thesis sets out the key steps of this journey and how important decisions are made as the research is undertaken. By critically reflecting upon what is learned along the way, a developing capability for thoughtful and independent research will be demonstrated.

Miles and Huberman (1994) state that the formulation of a research question is an iterative process, a point applicable to this thesis. To illustrate this process it may be helpful to clarify the initial research question and outline how it developed over the course of the study, as shown in figure 1.1. Such explication also serves as a device for



presenting an overview of the thesis. The development of the research question elucidates the writer's transition from a positivistic epistemology to a position that permits a more rigorous analysis of cultural phenomena, consistent with the CHAT approach selected and elaborated. This transition is introduced in this section and explicated further throughout the critical commentary that accompanies the thesis.

<b>Research question</b>	<b>Commentary on the writer's epistemological position</b>
Does peer mediation training reduce levels of school-violence/bullying?	The start point is characterised by positivist methodology.
What are the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services for interpersonal conflict resolution in schools?	Question reflects the shortcomings of positivism in demanding a rigorous analysis of cultural phenomena.
In what ways can CHAT illuminate the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services for interpersonal conflict resolution in schools?	Question reflects the adoption of CHAT to answer the research question.

**Figure 1.1: The development of a research question**

Chapter two contains a literature review, which informs the development of the research question. A number of topics are included in this chapter: the methodology of doing a literature review, the general characteristics of conflict, approaches to conflict resolution in schools and peer mediation. This review of literature highlights that conflict and its resolution are concepts that transcend levels of analysis. Different disciplines have examined conflict at the levels of psychological operations, individual actions and group activity. Research on initiatives in schools, including peer mediation, has shown that approaches to conflict resolution can be taught successfully. However, such initiatives are often quick-fix solutions aimed at specific problems with little attention to their longevity and demands placed on school organisation (Galloway 2003, Visser, Cole and Daniels 2000). How exactly schools are transformed, by whom and the long-term effect on organisation and behaviour are less frequently identified within the literature. Griffith's

(1996) study of peer mediation services in Scottish schools highlighted that a frequent obstacle to the successful implementation of such services was teachers' unwillingness to modify their own perceptions of authority. Hence, understanding how interventions such as peer mediation may or may not transform interpersonal conflict resolution in schools benefits from theoretical consideration of the relationship between social structures and opportunities for individuals to think and act in certain ways.

In light of the literature reviewed, chapter three contrasts two ways of investigating the implementation of peer mediation services in schools. One approach is to question; 'does peer mediation training reduce levels of school-violence/bullying?' The original proposal for a research degree framed such a question. It was planned to evaluate the impact of peer mediation training by WMQPEP upon measures of inter-pupil conflict (such as school violence and/or bullying) before, during and after the intervention. Such an approach was underpinned by a positivist epistemology, which approaches the study of human behaviour in ways comparable to the natural sciences. Positivism attempts to identify causal relationships between interventions and outcomes, usually by statistical association (Cohen and Manion 1994). In doing so, positivism makes the ontological assumption that psychological phenomena, including approaches to conflict resolution, are tantamount to overt acts of behaviour and the epistemological assumption that their scientific study can be undertaken by direct observation (Ratner 1997).

Whereas a positivist approach to evaluating peer mediation services may be useful in generating statistical data upon which to analyse the impact of interventions upon measures of conflict, as a principal research strategy the approach is rather limited and problematic (Miles and Huberman 1994). First, the literature review highlights that conflict and its resolution are dualistic concepts; they are both simultaneously behavioural and psychological. Yet, positivism expresses psychological phenomena as overt behaviours that can be observed, measured and correlated in simplistic terms as separate independent and dependent variables (Ratner 1997). Second, the relationship between individuals and schools and agencies working with schools is more complex, these levels of analysis are not discrete but interpenetrating (Cole 1996). Positivist

approaches may identify correlations that are statistically significant. However, little understanding of the nature of this relationship is gained because explanatory processes are not included in the analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994). Had the original research design of this thesis been maintained, the implementation of a peer mediation service at one school, investigated and presented in chapter seven, would have been declared a failure because the intervention had no quantifiable impact on self-reported overt behaviours. Yet, pupils and teachers interviewed at the school drew attention to a number of qualitative processes and outcomes that suggest peer mediation was successful in producing alternative responses to conflict.

Another approach is to question; ‘what are the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services for interpersonal conflict resolution in schools?’ The shift in emphasis of this reformulated research question to ‘processes’ evokes a contrasting view of the relationship between human behaviour and social structures. Whereas positivism’s emphasis on the correlation of variables assumes the individual is a separate entity to social structures (Ratner 1997), other approaches in social science acknowledge the interconnectedness between the two and the need to understand human development as a process enabled and constrained by social and cultural factors (May 1996). Chapter three argues the need for a theoretical approach able to conceptualise the relationship between the individual and the institutional in a non-deterministic way. Social theories are reviewed in the remainder of chapter three in search of such a theoretical approach.

From this review, CHAT is selected for several reasons outlined in chapter four. CHAT presents a cultural theory of mind in which processes of individual and social transformation are conceptualised. Tolman (1999) argues that an emphasis on activity refutes the separation of the individual and society. Instead, human behaviour is theorised as ‘societal’. This philosophical underpinning is derived from Marx (Kamenka 1983), who argues that human activity is dialectical. Human beings use culturally produced tools to appropriate nature for their own ends and in doing so transform their own nature. Human activity is a collective process involving the separation and coordination of actions, a feat only made possible by consciousness. In relation to these points, Tolman

(1999, p. 82, italics in original) states that ‘the individual *is* society manifested in a single organism’, meaning that the observation of any human action involves the use of tools that have been produced by society in orientation to broader motives.

Conflict poses a serious threat to the stability and potential achievements of collective activity because it threatens the manner in which actions are coordinated toward broader motives (Isenhardt and Spangle 2000). As a result, organisations such as schools have strategies in place to prevent, contain or resolve conflicts, both between pupils and between teachers and pupils. A CHAT approach to research proceeds with the structure of the social world included in its analysis, paying particular attention to the rules, division of labour and tools involved in achieving collective outcomes. By studying the implementation of peer mediation services in schools, the writer engages with the processes involved in transforming elements of activity to produce potentially new ways of resolving conflict. The selection of CHAT as the theoretical approach for this thesis results in the further reformulation of the research question:

In what ways can CHAT illuminate the processes and outcomes involved in implementing peer mediation services for interpersonal conflict resolution in schools?

CHAT provides a unit of analysis, the ‘activity system’ (Engeström 1998b), which can be used to depict any of a number of activities in school. Cole and Engeström (1993) argue that the minimal unit of analysis is two interacting activity systems. In this study, these are the peer mediation training provider and the activity of conflict resolution in schools. Engeström’s modelling of interconnected activity systems and his theory of expansive learning (Engeström 1998b, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c) are particularly useful in understanding how the production of alternative models of activity and transformation of activity takes place. Whereas Engeström’s work provides an elaborate theory of the production of outcomes, Daniels (2001a, 2001b) argues the production and structure of other aspects of activity (e.g. the mediating tool) are under theorised. For this reason, Bernstein’s (2000) attention to the relationship between social relations, the production of tools and certain psychological possibilities is incorporated into the theoretical approach.

In doing so, alternative models of activity can be understood as representing much more than superficial clashes of social practices. Rather, they may be underpinned by fundamentally different principles of power and control, which need resolving for transformation of activity to take place.

These processes are further illuminated by greater attention to the structure of different forms of conflict. Chapter five begins by constructing models of conflict, derived from Engestrom's (1998b) four levels of contradictions affecting activity systems. These are:

- Type I: Clash of object-orientated actions
- Type II: Clash of activities/objects
- Type III: Clash between object-orientated actions and the producer of aspects of activity
- Type IV: Clash between potential objects

Types I and II refer to interactional-behavioural conflicts, type III to interactional-structural conflicts and type IV to conceptual conflicts. These types of conflict are then placed onto a 'conflict cycle', which includes the history of a conflict, the conflict issues, conflict resolution and the potential transformation of the activity system. The conflict cycle is then used to depict a type IV conflict between traditional and innovative objects for empirical enquiry in chapters seven and eight. In this conflict, the traditional object denotes the current model of activity for resolving interpersonal conflict, referred to as the 'traditional activity' in the text. The innovative object denotes an alternative model of activity, peer mediation in this study, referred to as the 'innovative activity' in the text. The empirical investigations concern the processes that may or may not transform the traditional activity to produce new social relations, tools and psychological possibilities.

The design of these empirical investigations is outlined in chapter six, showing how two phases of inquiry are shaped by key concepts and methods from CHAT. Stage one is informed by four stages of post-Vygotskian method: reconstruction of historical behaviour, observation of rudimentary behaviour, provocation and observation of new behaviour, as realised by Engestrom's expansive learning approach to research (Engestrom 1999a). Stage two is informed by the historical reconstruction of behaviour

transformed in the past. Concepts from CHAT are used to identify and explain these processes of transformation. Despite limitations in a number of the data collection methods and tools used, interview data highlights that at schools where peer mediation was successful and sustained, principles of power and control were modified to give greater responsibilities to pupils. This shift in social relations produced new tools, which expanded the range of possible actions available to individuals in conflict. When these processes occurred, teachers reported a reduction in type I conflicts between pupils and greater time being taken by pupils to deliberate courses of action instead of direct confrontation, characterised by a shift in conflict from type I to IV.

Chapter nine presents a final commentary to the thesis, summarising and critiquing the theoretical approach and methods adopted as well as the nature and standing of the answer given to the research question. The final chapter also includes further reflection regarding the epistemological position of the writer at the endpoint of the thesis. This position, consistent with CHAT, is based upon an ontological view of human behaviour as societal. Epistemologically, human behaviour is best studied under development in natural settings over long periods of time (Cole 1996), using data collection methods that reflect the irreducible tension between culture and psychology (Ratner 1997). Tolman (1999) suggests that such an endeavour is best conducted with an existing theoretical understanding of the general processes under study, a focus on the concrete nature of the immediate problem and the aim of revealing underlying causal dynamics.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Chapter two commences with a brief discussion of the issues involved in conducting literature reviews (Fink 1998, Hart 1998), including the principles underpinning the selection and examination of material. The purpose of this literature review is to inform the writer of the existing knowledge about the topic under study (Clough and Nutbrown 2002). A thorough knowledge of peer mediation services for interpersonal conflict resolution in schools requires understanding of several areas of literature. Peer mediation is a specific form of third-party mediation and one of many ways to resolve difficult conflicts. Hence, it is important to understand the characteristics of conflict in general and position peer mediation in relation to other approaches to managing conflict resolution in schools. The review of literature also identifies gaps and limitations in existing theory (Fink 1998). Therefore, the review should identify findings from research regarding the implementation of peer mediation and similar interventions in schools and consider how this study can add to the current knowledge base. The areas of literature subsequently identified for review are:

- I) the general characteristics of conflict,
- II) ways of managing interpersonal conflict resolution in schools,
- III) the history and nature of peer mediation as a specific form of conflict resolution and research about peer mediation completed to date.

Each of these areas forms a distinct part of the literature review.

## 2.2 Undertaking a literature review

### 2.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of a researcher conducting a literature review is to,

find out what already exists in the area in which they propose to do research before doing the research itself... The researcher needs to know about the contributions others have made to the knowledge pool relevant to their topic. It is the ideas and work of others that will provide the researcher with the framework for their own work; this includes methodological assumptions, data-collection techniques, key concepts and structuring the research into a conventional academic thesis.

(Hart 1998, pp. 26-27)

Thus, a review of literature performs several key functions (Fink 1998). It distinguishes between research that has been done and needs to be done, identifies the key concepts relevant to the topic and critiques the methodologies used. Most importantly, it recognises and synthesises relationships between theory and practice to develop new perspectives.

The review of literature contained within chapter two and the subsequent review and development of social theory in later chapters constitutes a significant proportion of the thesis. This is because it is necessary to review several large bodies of knowledge to equip the writer with a sound understanding of their chosen topic and methodologies for its study (Clough and Nutbrown 2002). The literature review informs the selection and development of a theoretical approach. It highlights the need to identify an approach able to conceptualise social and individual transformation as interrelated processes. There is no shortcut to this position; a researcher cannot commence an investigation with misconceptions (e.g. conflict can be eliminated), unaware of the epistemological implications of theoretical approaches and ill equipped with poorly refined concepts regarding their subject matter and ideas for collecting data to answer their question. In



light of the importance of this task, it is appropriate to discuss the methodology of selecting and examining literature for review.

### *2.2.2 Selection of literature*

Given the extent of literature available for review, it is necessary to consider methods for selecting manageable chunks of relevant material. Literature reviews should offer a systematic coverage of a topic, which benefit from a strategic search and informed analysis. Fink (1998) outlines several stages of conducting a literature review, which are summarised chronologically as:

- Searches of electronic bibliographical databases using key words relevant to the review's purpose.
- Manual search of the references of selected studies.
- Complementary search of the Internet.
- Reading of selected literature.
- Abstraction of data or information from the literature.
- Analysis of the data for trends across the whole body of the literature.
- Communication of findings (including the approach and resources utilised by the review).

To commence a literature review it is helpful to identify parameters to restrict the search. These can include key concepts and the window of time in which to include publications. A search of the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences electronic database using the key word 'conflict' for journal articles written between 1951-2002 unearthed 26,509 sources. Clearly, it is impractical to review such a large number of articles and a systematic review of the literature is not possible. Instead, Clough and Nutbrown (2002) recommend identifying the intersections of key concepts as if they were mapped on a Venn diagram (e.g. 'conflict' and 'education') in order to identify the most relevant material for review. This is possible when the research topic includes a few concepts but

is problematic when the area of research is extensive and subsumes many concepts. The searches of combinations of key concepts often yielded small numbers of articles, many of which were not relevant to the topic of study. Those that were relevant were reviewed. As an example, the British Education Index electronic database was searched using the keywords ‘conflict’, ‘resolution’ and ‘schools’ for articles written between 1986-2002, which revealed seven sources, four of which were relevant and reviewed. More specific searches were helpful. For example, a search using the previous parameters for articles using the key phrase “peer mediation” found three sources, all of which were reviewed.

The search strategy was not always consistent for every area of the literature reviewed. Whereas it is possible to conduct a specific search of literature about peer mediation and read all the results, it is not possible regarding the area of conflict resolution in general. To manage the vast quantities of material available on conflict resolution the writer prioritised the review of conceptual frameworks of conflict rather than discrete theories. A useful strategy was the manual search of the references of significant publications found. Such an approach, discussed by Fink (1998) and Hart (1998), was particularly fruitful where the subject matter under review was broad. For example, overviews of conflict theories (e.g. Easterbrook, Beck, Goodlet, Plowman, Sharples and Wood 1992, Isenhardt and Spangle 2000) lead to many other useful sources. However and as a cautionary note, the most cited works are not necessarily the most important (Hart 1998).

Not all relevant literature is published in academic texts. For example, newspaper articles, professional magazines and the Internet can contain illuminating material but are difficult to search systematically. Also, the most recent material may not be available in print as it takes several months, even years, for findings to be published. To access the dissemination of recent research and thinking, the writer attended professional events (e.g. peace education network meetings) and academic conferences (e.g. International Society for Cultural Research and Activity Theory). The Internet was also explored using the search engine Alta Vista. Fink (1998) warns that searches of the Internet need to take into account issues concerning both the management of vast quantities of ‘hits’ and the varied quality of material within this output. A search of the Internet using the same

keywords as entered into electronic literature databases, once again, yielded far too many references to be managed. However, sifting through some of the results pages of more specific searches identified further valuable sources, which in turn sometimes linked to other relevant material. For example, a number of important websites (e.g. the homepages of Mediation UK, Quaker Education Advisory Board), key pragmatists in the area (e.g. Johnson and Johnson, development education centres and projects) and some academic articles published by research centres (e.g. Hirshleifer 1984, Cunningham 1998) were found.

The review of literature is an ongoing process. Although this chapter contains a review of several areas of literature, such an endeavour actually represents the first of several iterative trawls of literature. The review of literature accompanies the epistemological journey charted by the thesis, from the original research idea to the collection of empirical data. Each of the subsequent chapters identifies, selects and reviews relevant bodies of literature, which move the thesis onwards. The selection of literature for review in subsequent chapters is responsive to questions raised alongside the development of the thesis. Over the course of the thesis, chapters two to six consider the following questions:

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Chapter 2 | <i>What are the general characteristics of conflict?</i>   |
|           | <i>What are the different ways in which schools manage conflict resolution?</i>                                    |
|           | <i>What is the history and nature of peer mediation?</i>   |
|           | <i>What research has been done about peer mediation?</i>   |
| Chapter 3 | <i>What are the different ways of answering the research question?</i>   |
|           | <i>What approaches exist in the social sciences to theorise processes of social and individual transformation?</i> |
| Chapter 4 | <i>What are the merits and limitations of the selected approach?</i>   |
| Chapter 5 | <i>How can this approach be used to theorise conflict resolution in schools?</i>                                   |
| Chapter 6 | <i>What are the methodological implications of the chosen approach for empirical study?</i>                        |

The relationship between these questions and the development and refinement of the research question (refer back to figure 1.1) is the subject of a critical commentary accompanying the thesis. The literature, particularly the theoretical position adopted and elaborated, is also the subject of further critical reflection as the empirical data is shared in chapters seven and eight, and the whole thesis concluded and critiqued in chapter nine.

### *2.2.3 Examination of the literature*

Some literature reviews base their findings on ‘scientific’ evidence gathered from experimentation and systematic observation; where opinion and conjecture are excluded (Fink 1998). However, research in the social sciences is not as tidy (Robson 1993). Therefore, large parts of the literature reviewed for this thesis are not derived from such tightly defined experiments. As such evidence, indeed any, is frequently tentative, Clough and Nutbrown (2002) give advice on reading critically. It is insufficient for a researcher to simply read and aggregate material. Therefore, it is necessary to discuss briefly the examination of selected literature. Reading critically involves asking questions of the literature reviewed, such as what world-view is an argument derived from, what opinion is the author attempting to impress and why, who is the intended audience and what evidence exists to support or contest the argument. The writer found a number of papers, notably those by Overton (1975, 1984) and Overton and Reese (1973, 1981) useful in this regard. Their attention to how scientific programmes are underpinned by views of the world provided a framework against which to assess the epistemological positions and lines of argument contained within various texts.

Clough and Nutbrown (2002) recommend that detailed notes should be kept on all reading, which go further than summarising the key points of a text to include critical reflection. Such notes were kept on all reading, which included commentary on each author’s theoretical positions, approaches and main arguments. A concept map of the research topic (see Hart 1998 regarding mapping ideas in this way) was also kept. This

provided a semiotic tool for critically reflecting upon reading and identifying points of convergence/divergence across areas of the literature, emerging themes and further questions.

### **2.3 Part I: The general characteristics of conflict**

To understand the impact of peer mediation services upon interpersonal conflict resolution in schools it is necessary to have a general understanding of the characteristics of conflict. This was perhaps the most challenging area of the initial search of literature to review. The quantity and diversity of literature on conflict presented the writer with a number of early challenges. ‘Conflict’ is a concept, which has been defined, investigated and employed against diverse disciplinary backgrounds. The literature contains many contrasting assumptions and emphasises (Isenhardt and Spangle 2000). Hart (1998) indicates that terms can be used inconsistently within and across different research programmes. A necessary task of a review of literature then is to reflect upon how such a term as conflict is defined and used within and across different fields.

The literature contains many different disciplinary sources and explanations for the study of conflict (Valsiner and Cairns 1992). Conceptualising conflict requires theorising a number of elements; these include different levels of analysis and power (Dahrendorf 1959), multiple subject characteristics and relationships between these characteristics (Putnam & Poole 1987), and developmental stages of conflict over time (Thomas 1976). However, all conflicts appear to have certain characteristics and processes in common. According to Cohen (1995) these are parties (individuals and various formations of groups) including their perceptions and a role for ‘non-parties’, goals/needs/motives, the conflict issues, clashes (both behavioural and conceptual), an intensity, resolution and history/time. Putnam and Poole (1987) identify several similar components of conflict. These are actor variables (skills, beliefs), conflict issues, communication, relationship variables (trust, power, interdependency) and contextual factors (organisational norms, conflict history).

Communicating the knowledge acquired through reading requires careful thought. There are alternative ways of reviewing the literature on conflict. One way is to compile a review of theoretical perspectives one by one, outlining their similarities and differences. A previous attempt at doing this read like a list and detracted attention from connections between theories. Another way is to analyse the commonalities from the literature and use these to structure the review, dealing with different theoretical perspectives thematically. This approach was favoured by Easterbrook et al (1992) and is impressive in its succinctness. Therefore, structuring the review of this area of literature via a list of themes is favoured, which form the sub-headings of part I of the literature review. Each of these themes forms a self-contained essay, identifying a key concept of the literature about conflict.

### *2.3.1 Definitions of conflict are dualistic*

Hart (1998) advises that the understanding of a concept can be aided by a brief examination of its development and definition. Such an exercise highlights a dualistic definition of conflict, which is maintained in much of the literature. The Oxford dictionary defines conflict as a fight, struggle or clash. The word is derived from the Latin word ‘confligere’; meaning to strike together, which is commonly sub-divided into two further definitions (Wright 1951). Wright (1951) explains that one definition states conflict is a fight, battle or prolonged struggle between opposing forces, which can include beliefs and ideas that may result in a physical clash. Another definition states conflict can also occur psychologically, as emotional distress between incompatible wishes within a person. Therefore, in English conflict has both a conceptual (internal) as well as a behavioural (external) property at both individual and group levels of analysis. This has important implications for the study of the phenomenon, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Many definitions of conflict classify the concept broadly, stating the phenomenon includes the opposition or inconsistency between a diverse range of properties (Easterbrook et al 1992). However, Mack and Snyder (1957) assert that conflict

is for the most part a rubber concept, being stretched and moulded for the purposes at hand. In its broadest sense it seems to cover everything from war to choices between ice-cream sodas or sundaes.

(Mack and Snyder 1957, p. 212)

To limit what is defined as conflict Mack and Snyder (1957) suggest several distinctions need to be made. For example, competition may be a source of conflict but does not involve direct confrontation. Other terms suggested as being distinct from conflict are social cleavages, misunderstandings, tensions and rivalry. A behavioural definition is favoured by Mack and Snyder (1957), which has to satisfy five criteria:

1. At least two parties (or analytically distinct units) which are visible to and in contact with each other.
2. Mutually exclusive values based on scarcity of resources/positions.
3. a) Behaviours intent on thwarting or controlling the other party/unit and b) a relationship in which parties can only gain at the others expense.
4. Mutually opposed actions and reactions.
5. Attempts to acquire or actual acquisition of power.

These requirements imply that conflict is a particular social interaction/relationship between units with mutually exclusive values. Conflicts of an internal/conceptual nature are omitted. Such a view is rejected by Dahrendorf (1959), whose definition is anti-behaviourist. He argues such differentiation of conflicts; disputes, tensions, contests and competition are based on value judgements of intensity and violence, rather than differences of objectives. In doing so, conflict is expressed as observable acts such as physical violence and its dualistic nature is neglected. A broader definition favours greater inclusion of a range of potential types of conflict.

According to those who favour a behavioural definition (e.g. Mack and Snyder 1957), a conflict does not exist until there is an observable struggle. This imposes greater clarity on the term but is in contrast to those who argue for a motive centred definition (e.g. Dahrendorf 1959) and conflict resolution theorists who emphasise communicational and perceptual elements (e.g. Weeks 1992). Such theorists argue that conflict can only be understood in relation to its underlying issues and antecedents. Concentration on observable acts of conflict leads to a focus on the technology of overt conflict (e.g. a fight) and the neglect of issues, which may have been latent for some time and may have triggered the conflict (e.g. the history or antecedents of the fight).

Fink (1968) suggests the following broad definition of conflict:

any social situation or process in which two or more social entities are linked by at least one form of antagonistic psychological relation (*internal conflict*) or at least one form of antagonistic interaction (*external conflict*).

(Fink 1968, p. 456, additions in italics)

This is a useful definition because it acknowledges the dualistic (internal and external) nature of conflict. Thus, conflict can be seen as the opposition or inconsistency of parties' interests, goals, ideas, motives or needs. The term 'object' can be used to subsume these sources of opposition. Object is a term used to incorporate diverse entities (e.g. Damasio 2000); these can be as diverse as a person, an idea, an emotion, and an individual or collective goal. Therefore the term 'a clash of objects' subsumes any manifestation of conflict. Despite a breadth of definition in the literature, there appears consensus on the dualistic nature of conflict (e.g. MacGrath 1984), though Mack and Snyder (1957) are a notable exception, and its inevitability as a product of human activity (Easterbrook et al 1992).



### *2.3.2 Conflict is inevitable*

Given a broad definition of conflict, a number of theorists argue that conflict is an inevitable phenomenon at all levels of human behaviour. It is a component of thought processes, learning and cognitive development (Aronson 1999, Desforjes 1995, Wood 1989). It is also present at all levels of human interaction. In a world of finite resources (Deutsch 1973, Duke 1976) and multiple ideas or beliefs (Ferguson 1977, Wright 1951), conflict is an inevitable product of opposing actions and values. In Deutsch's (1973) definition of a conflict of interests, a conflict exists when attempts by one party to maximise their needs interferes with another's. Thus, if there are insufficient resources or inadequate means to satisfy these interests, conflict is an inevitable experience in the competition to acquire them. Conflict is also a component of human interaction with societal structures. Marx (Kamenka 1983) attempted to show how conflict was a necessary component in the transformation of class relationships. Many theorists from a variety of paradigms since, including Durkheim (Giddens 1972), Lewin, Meyers, Kalhorn, Farber and French (1944), Dahrendorf (1959), Quinney (1970) and Foucault (1995) have argued the endemic nature of conflict as a product of social forces.

In research by Tyler (1998), instances of inter-pupil conflict were observed as being normal parts of everyday school life. Such conflict can take various forms, most commonly, these are subsumed in the literature by the concepts of violence and bullying, both can be physical and/or mental. Among a large-scale survey of children and violence, the Gulbenkian Foundation (1995) suggested that the majority of children in the UK experience some form of violence against them. Fifty-eight per cent of children surveyed reported experiences of being bullied. These victims of bullying will have experienced persistent and prolonged episodes of physical and/or mental violence. Indices collected by Arora (1994, 1999) show that 8 to 50% of pupils in different school populations experience bullying. In a survey of over 10,000 UK pupils, Balding (1996) showed that an average of 30% of secondary school pupils reported experiences of bullying in their previous term at school and 10% on their way to school. Balding (1996) also found that 27 % of boys and 35 % of girls went to school in fear of being bullied.

Conflicts in school also occur between pupils and teachers (Cothran and Ennis 1997, DES 1989, Kirby 1989, Mitina 1990 and Griffith 1996). Whereas reported incidents of inter-pupil violence appear to be high, attacks by pupils on teachers appear to be rare. In a survey of 2,500 teachers, the Elton Report (DES 1989) found that 1 in 200 teachers had been the victim of a violent incident (see also Hagedorn 1991). The overall picture created by the report was of teachers being ground down by persistent misbehaviour rather than ‘beaten up’ (DES 1989).

Press comments have tended to concentrate on attacks by pupils on teachers. Our evidence indicates that attacks are rare in schools in England and Wales. We also find that teachers do not see attacks as their major problem. Few teachers in our survey reported physical aggression towards themselves. Most of these did not rate it as the most difficult behaviour with which they had to deal. Teachers in our survey were most concerned about the cumulative effects of disruption to their lessons caused by relatively trivial but persistent misbehaviour.

(DES 1989, p. 11)

Managing conflict is a regular part of teachers’ jobs, whether it is direct challenges to their authority, transgressions affecting their classroom management or issues between pupils under their responsibility (Wragg 1994, Zirpoli and Melloy 1993). Eighty per cent of teachers interviewed by Higgins and Priest (1990) reported that their job involved arbitrating disputes between pupils to be at least a weekly occurrence. As a result of this inevitability, many educationalists emphasise whether conflicts are managed constructively or destructively rather than eliminated (e.g. Cohen 1995, Johnson and Johnson 1994, Leimdorfer 1995, Rawlings 1996, Stacey and Robinson 1997).

### *2.3.3 Conflict subsumes different levels of analysis*

Conflict subsumes several levels of analysis, including operations, individual actions and group activity (Easterbrook et al 1992). In chapter one it was stated that the study of the implementation of peer mediation services in schools emphasises at least two levels of

potential conflict: I) between the innovative practices of the intervention and the current practices of schools, and II) the impact of implementing the service on the resolution of interpersonal conflicts. Therefore it is necessary to understand conflict and its resolution as concepts that transcend social and individual levels of analysis. Conceptualising conflict across levels of analysis poses a number of theoretical problems, which are introduced in this section and revisited in chapter three.

There are a number of attempts to classify the parties or elements involved in conflicts, with the aim of generating a cohesive framework of conflict types across levels of analysis. One example is Boulding (1962), who bases his conceptualisation on three main types of parties: the individual, the group (defined as an unorganised sub-population, which is involuntarily classified, e.g. sex/race) and the organisation (defined as a well structured group with clearly defined roles and constitution, which is mainly voluntary classified, e.g. political group). Within and between these parties exist different forms of relationships. Groups can be strictly partitioned or overlap and parties can occupy discrete or intermingled space. Given these potential dynamics, Boulding (1962) identifies eight types of conflict:

1. Conflicts between individuals.
2. Boundary conflict between spatially segregated groups.
3. Ecological conflict between groups spatially intermingled.
4. Homogeneous organisation conflict (e.g. state v state).
5. Heterogeneous organisation conflict (e.g. state v church).
6. Conflicts between an individual and a group, mainly socialisation in origin (e.g. child v family, person v peer group, subordinate v superordinate).
7. Conflict between a person and an organisation (mainly role conflicts).
8. Conflict between a group and an organisation.

Boulding's (1962) classification draws attention to conflict between parties defined to some extent by boundaries. However, Boulding's (1962) classification neglects conflict at the level of operations, such as when people are faced with quandaries. Galtung (1965)

uses the notion of a system to represent both individual and collective parties. Either party has the capacity for conflict within itself and in relation to other parties, thus identifying four different types of conflict (figure 2.1). This allows the creation of an intrapersonal category within the same conceptual framework.

	Intrasystem conflict	Intersystem conflict
Individual Level	intrapersonal	interpersonal
Collective Level	intranational	international

**Figure 2.1: Four types of conflict (Galtung 1965, p. 348)**

Another example of classifying conflict is Dahrendorf's (1959) conceptual framework, which represents types of conflict as a matrix of power dynamics between roles, groups, sectors, societies and suprasocietal relations (figure 2.2).

Social Units	Equal vs. equal	Superordinate vs. subordinate	Whole vs. part
Roles	1 (family role vs. occupational role)	2 (occupational role vs. union role)	3 (social personality vs. family role)
Groups	4 (boys vs. girls in school class)	5 (father vs. child)	6 (nuclear family vs. extended family)
Sectors	7 (air force vs. army)	8 (management versus union)	9 (department vs. university)
Societies	10 (Protestants vs. Catholics)	11 (free men vs. slaves)	12 (state vs. criminal gang)
Suprasocietal relations	13 (Soviet bloc vs. western bloc)	14 (Soviet Union vs. Hungary)	15 (Common market vs. UK)

**Figure 2.2: Classification of conflict theories (based on Dahrendorf 1959)**

Whereas such classifications of conflict identify the potential social units subsumed by the concept of conflict, its utility for theorising conflict across levels of analysis is limited. This is because a number of theoretical perspectives (Isenhardt and Spangle 2000) have been developed to explain conflict at different levels of analysis that cannot be aggregated easily. A criticism of synthesising social units into such a framework is that each social unit identified relates to a particular type of conflict with its own unique characteristics (Fink 1968). Alternatively, conflicts have been classified by situations. For example Boulding (1957) has suggested three levels of classification:

- Economic/issue conflicts.
- Interaction conflicts.
- Internal/quandary conflicts.

There are many other frameworks that conceptualise conflict by type (e.g. Patchen 1970, Pondy 1967, MacGrath 1984). However, classifying conflict by type or by social units implies it is a phenomenon with distinct properties at each level of analysis. Whereas this may be the case to a certain degree, such conceptualisations detract attention away from the commonalities of the phenomenon across levels of analysis and imply that some of these levels of analysis are independent of one another. Fink (1968) suggests the need to develop a new language, which conceptualises conflict across levels of analysis, rather than the problematic project of aggregating existing theories. Developing a theoretical approach that integrates levels of analysis is one of the major tasks of chapters three to five.

#### *2.3.4 Conflict occurs in a cultural and historical context*

All conflict has a history or antecedent conditions (Katz and Lawyer 1993). Leimdorfer (1995) describes how emotional baggage from the past is brought to the conflict situation. Previous knowledge and experience, past behaviour, conversations, perceptions,

successes and failures, all contribute to how people approach such situations. Conflict is also culturally situated. Field theories, reviewed by Isenhardt and Spangle (2000) and Slee (1995) suggest that actions are products of contextual forces, which enable and constrain human behaviour. For example, psychological fields such as the family, school and workplace may produce contesting expectations, commitments and loyalties, and raise issues of power.

Valsiner and Cairns (1992) discuss how two meta-theoretical frameworks account for the role of context in relation to conflict. These are the views of the individual as a) separate from their environment (exclusive partitioning) and b) interdependent with their environment (inclusive partitioning). Exclusive partitioning allows conflict to be defined as an incompatibility of separate parts. Resolution becomes synonymous with a choice between different options, though Valsiner and Cairns (1992) argue it is simplistic to suggest that elimination of differences will remove conflict. Alternatively, inclusive partitioning preserves heterogeneity. Conflict can be seen in terms of the characteristics of linkages between parts of a whole. Opposition between parts cannot be resolved by elimination because the parts are dependent on each other for their own existence. Thus, inherent in any 'peace' are the conditions for future conflict and in any conflict exists the conditions for future peace.

An example of an approach, which employs inclusive partitioning, is the ecosystemic perspective (Tyler 1992, 1998, Tyler and Jones 1998). This views conflict as a product of interdependent contextual forces. The ecosystemic approach emerges from the work of Bateson (Bateson 1972), rooted in the theories of von Bertalanffy. It is based on the idea that human interactional structures, such as families and schools are self-regulating systems, which function in a way analogous to the natural ecosystem. They are sustained by the reproduction of interactional patterns among their participants (sub-systems), which are shaped and continually modified by the survival needs of the system as a whole. As an example, Cooper and Upton (1990, 1991) discuss how parents colluded with a child's conflict with schoolteachers regarding homework as it detracted attention away from their marital problems. The ecosystemic approach to conflict resolution suggests that conflicting parties have their own good reasons for their actions. Negative

views of each other, their attributes and actions sustain and/or intensify the conflict. Resolution therefore requires analysis of each party's role in the conflict in relation to the system as a whole.

The cultural and historical context of a conflict is informed by the social relations between individuals, groups and organisations over time. According to Deutsch (1973) and Branco (2001), the structure of contexts will effect whether group behaviour is competitive or co-operative. In a review of conflict and cooperation in small groups, Easterbrook et al (1992) draw the following conclusions about social relations:

- Group cohesion decreases conflict.
- Occurrence of conflict varies in group development (see also Tuckmann 1965 and Stanford 1990).
- Clearly defined roles can potentially reduce conflict.
- Conflict strategies vary with the pressure of time and size of group.
- Conflict strategies vary with the values of the group (individualistic cultures prefer adjudication, collective cultures prefer third-party mediation).

Social relations between conflicting parties raise issues of power (Duke 1976). Power has been a major consideration in a number of theories related to conflict. Many of them have their roots in Marxist theory (Kamenka 1983). Duke (1976) argues that every 'elite' operates to legitimise and to hide its power. Theorists such as Illich (1971) and Quinney (1970) view controlling agents such as law, governance and education as having their origins with the ruling class. Collectively, they serve to maintain class structure and legitimise unequal access to resources and power in society. Slee (1995) views discipline issues in schools as 'resistance' to the dominant norms promoted by the education system. The concept of 'resistance' is developed from a study by Willis (1977), who describes an endemic and routine conflict between working class males and their teachers. Willis (1977) argues that marginalised sectors of society operate within normative frameworks characterised by patterns of language use, which makes engagement with the demands of schooling difficult for some. This is because

inconsistencies between the authoritative language of the school (Bourdieu 1991) and the everyday language of some pupils (Bernstein 1981) restrict both their access to the rewards of education and its perceived relevance. For example, many educational outcomes may be seen as irrelevant to pupils expecting a career involving manual labour (Willis 1977).

These theories have often been related to notions of the ‘hidden curriculum’ (Illich 1971). This is a concept that implies more is learned in schools than just knowledge and facts. Schools are places controlled by adults, evident in the compulsory attendance of pupils, the selection of activities for study, enforcement of engagement with these activities and rules regulating pupil conduct (Harber 2002a). The implications of what and how things are taught in relation to children’s learning about conflict are discussed in part II of this literature review.

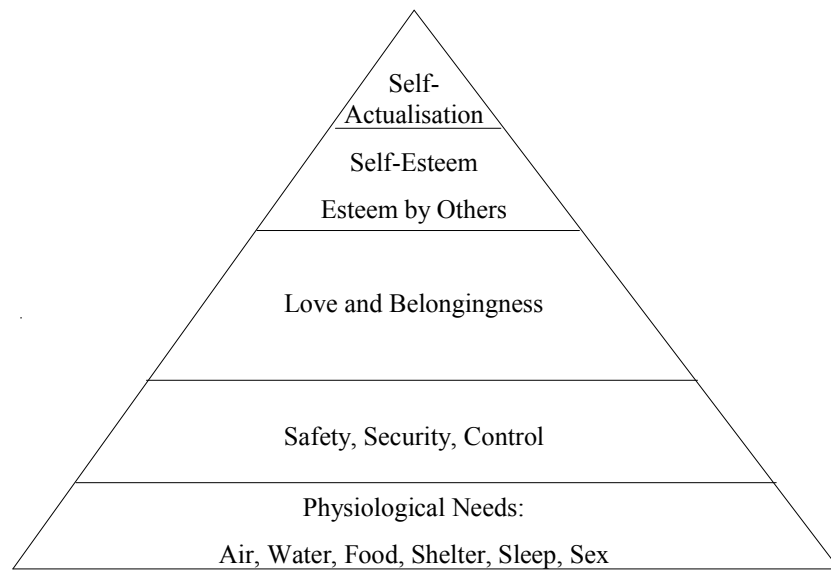
### *2.3.5 Conflict is goal/object orientated*

The causes of conflict are potentially numerous. Deutsch (1973) indicates that these can include access to resources, perceived interference and/or inconsistent values/beliefs. Duke (1976) states that the pursuit of collective goals or ‘objects’ is central to understanding conflict in international relations. International life is characterised by the unrelenting pursuit of objects characterised by competition for trade, commerce, prestige, status, allegiances and the promotion of ideologies (Wright 1951). Burton (1962) explains how developments in the efficiency of object attainment, e.g. economic competitiveness, can bring nations’ interests and welfare into direct conflict and relations may become fraught. Subsequent conflict can then be seen as a failure to adjust to changes in international relations. Burton’s peace theory (1962) suggests peacetime is not an ‘equilibrium’ or a time characterised by the equal distribution of objects, but rather the constructive management of such change.



At a different level of analysis, conflicts in schools are similarly goal/object orientated. The literature regarding inter-pupil conflict indicates that disputes can concern material issues such as arguments over possessions or social matters such as friendships. Higgins and Priest (1990) found the most common cause of conflict at secondary school was name calling, causing 23% of disputes. Other sources of conflict were issues to do with friends and relationships, bullying, possessions, queue jumping, family feuds, tale telling, games and racism. In younger children, Shantz and Shantz (1985) found disputes over possessions to be more frequent. Although, possessions caused more conflict between younger boys and issues of friendship between younger girls. In a contrasting study, Tizard, Burke, Farquhar and Plewis' (1988) interviews with infants noted that 66% complained about being teased and approximately the same proportion reported fights on the playground.

All these conflicts involve an individual's orientation to a goal or object, which is related to the fulfilment of their personal physical and psychological needs (Cohen 1995). All human beings share these needs. They include fundamental needs such as the need to obtain food and drink, to feel safe and secure. They may also include more sophisticated needs such as the need to feel loved, esteemed and to achieve one's potential when basic needs have already been met. In conceptualising human beings as wanting animals, Maslow (1968) proposed that once a need or object is met, a more sophisticated target might be pursued. Maslow (1954) has suggested a hierarchy of these needs, shown as a model in figure 2.3.



**Figure 2.3: Hierarchy of needs (based on Maslow 1954)**

Although Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs is highly individualistic it is a useful example, which shows that human activity, including conflict, is orientated to notions of goals and needs. Goleman (1996) argues that if these basic needs/goals are not met or are jeopardised, humans can become distraught, frustrated, bored, and/or volatile. Those who have their fundamental needs met consistently are more likely to accept and overcome setbacks in their pursuit of more sophisticated needs because they have greater experience of stability. People who have not had their needs met consistently may be used to meeting them via uncertain processes and can become defensive of what they have.

Lewin et al's (1944) frustration-aggression theory places goal/object orientation at the centre of its understanding of conflict. It proposes that all aggression and violence is caused by the frustration of an individual's goal or group's objective. In critique, Sillince (1993) argues that such approaches have concentrated upon the attainment or non-attainment of a single goal or objective. Sillince (1993) highlights that emotion often

arises from unanticipated conflicts caused by the non-attainment of side goals and argues further that the notion of ‘goal’ should be extended to incorporate aspects of identity. In reacting to the attainment or non-attainment of goals, humans are particularly sensitive to their own ‘sense of self’ and other’s intentions and motivations in goal pursuit (Dodge 1986, Thomas and Pondy 1977).

### *2.3.6 Conflict involves the application of different strategies resulting in different outcomes*

Attribution theories (e.g. Thomas and Pondy 1977) and some aspects of psychodynamic theories, discussed by Isenhardt and Spangle (2000) suggest individuals make sense of the world by assigning qualities and causes to people and events based on what is relevant to them. According to Thomas and Pondy (1977), these assigned qualities play a central mediating role in shaping individual’s reactions to other’s behaviour. In doing so, people frequently assign positive consequences to their own actions, circumstance to their own failures and negative consequences to the motives and actions of others.

Cunningham (1998) argues that classical and historical theories have often neglected the consideration of emotional and psychological theory in attempting to explain individual and group behaviour. As a result, such theories fail to engage with the ‘us versus them’ psychological processes prevalent in some types of conflict. Psychodynamic theories suggest conflict is approached from one of a number of unconscious states (anxiety/ego/fear/aggression/guilt), which influence individual’s perception of choice (Isenhardt and Spangle 2000). From this viewpoint, human beings think in terms of extreme opposites, formulating beliefs in terms of ‘either-ors’ (Dewey 1922, Winnicott 1964), which may help fuel and prolong conflicts. A number of theorists (Cunningham 1998, Ferguson 1977, Lorenz 1966, Montville 1990, Nisbett 1976, Volkan, Julius and Montville 1990, Wedge 1973) discuss the role of innate psychological processes in

approaches to conflict. These arguments are disputed by social learning theorists (e.g. Groebel and Hinde 1989), who state that strategies for resolving conflict are learned.

Alternatives to psychodynamic theories are those that evoke notions of human behaviour as conscious and strategic. Two such theories, social exchange theory and dual concerns theory, are critiqued here. Both theories imply conflict resolution strategies can be learned, an argument from chapter one which is revisited and critiqued.

#### *a) Social exchange theory*

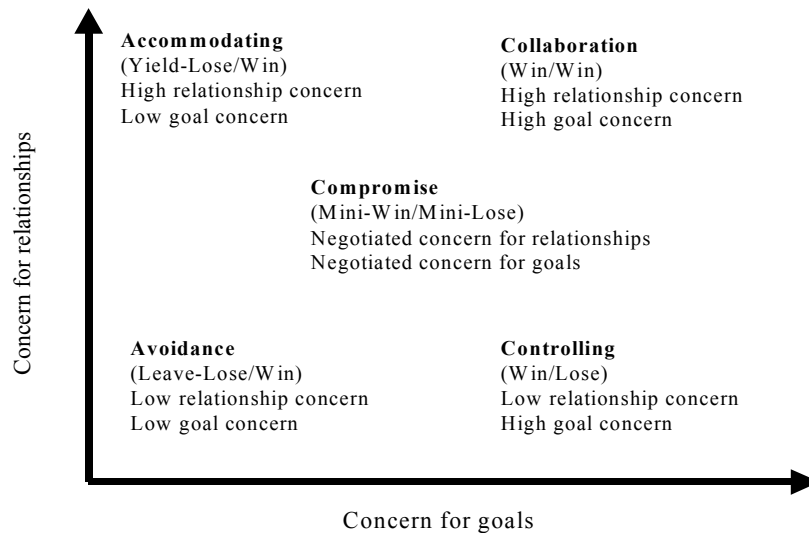
Social exchange theory views conflict from the perspective of market analysis. People make choices based on self-interest and the evaluation of rewards and costs of different courses of action. Duke (1976) and Cunningham (1998) discuss two such theories. These are decision-making and games theories (Rapoport 1970, Schelling 1960 respectively), which have their roots in the model of the 'rational actor'. The rational actor model was developed to explain human economic behaviour. It presupposes that decisions, interpersonal and international, are made by individuals or representatives of individuals who are in possession of the full knowledge of the facts.

Hirshleifer (1984) outlines an economic approach to conflict, which utilises the model of the rational actor. The model proposes that actors will engage in conflict whenever doing so represents the most advantageous means of competing in a world of scarce resources. A number of mathematical formulae are then generated from this assumption. Although the model of the rational actor credits individuals with the ability to be strategic rather than intuitive (Rapoport 1970), the overall approach has a number of limitations. Hirshleifer (1984, p. 8) acknowledges that analysis is restricted to the interactions between two individuals at a single insulated level of analysis. The approach views human beings as 'rational actors' rather than risk takers, who may be uncertain about all the facts. Thus, the theory can be criticised for modelling behaviour in a cultural-historical vacuum and having limited value to conflict resolution in real life. The

dynamics of the ‘games’ used as examples are also of restricted utility in their accommodation of multiple players and choices.

*b) Dual concerns*

Dual concerns theory, described by Johnson and Johnson (1997), posits that conflict and its resolution are informed by actor’s deliberations between goals and relationships. If goals are rated over relationships, the approach to the conflict will be controlling. If relationships are valued higher than goals, the choice of conflict resolution strategy will be to avoid the conflict. If orientations to goals and relationships are both high, a compromising or collaborative approach to conflict is more likely. This approach to conflict resolution has been represented by a number of theorists, for example Katz & Lawyer’s (1993) version shown in figure 2.4.



**Figure 2.4: A model of conflict resolution strategies based upon the dual concerns of goals and relationships (Katz and Lawyer 1993, p. 15)**

Dual concerns theory has been criticised by Volkemman and Bergmann (1989). They argue such an approach is an abstraction and better describes intended conflict resolution strategy rather than actual behaviour. Instances of revenge and aggression are not adequately represented because the role history plays in affecting attitudes to conflict is neglected. Consequently, the model is isolated in time. However, the model is useful in showing that conflict resolution results in different outcomes depending upon the strategy adopted. An assumption often made about conflict is it has to result in a winner and a loser (Weeks 1992). Dual concerns theory shows that when both goals and relationships are high priorities, conflict can be resolved in a manner acceptable to all parties and their interests. These are called win-win outcomes and are the aim of a number of approaches to conflict resolution, including peer mediation. Sometimes, other strategies may result in constructive resolutions, depending upon the circumstances (Katz and Lawyer 1993).

*c) People can be trained in conflict resolution strategies*

There are certain stimuli and/or environmental conditions, which are likely to result in predictable responses to a 'perceived' conflict (Herbert 1989, Manning 1989). Cannon (1932) describes a number of processes the body automatically engages in response to life threats. The human body will always neurologically and psychologically react to disturbance and danger in ways that will attempt to maintain stability essential to life. The body responds automatically to low levels of energy, infection and injury with the autonomous responses of thirst, hunger, sleep, the destruction of invading bacteria, the clotting of blood and scabbing. These vital responses all increase the likelihood of self-preservation. Interestingly, the sight of a wild animal or human attacker or another threat may also produce an automated response called the 'fight or flight' response. This involves the brain quickly processing the danger of a situation, recalling the memory of similar attacks and instantaneously preparing the body to either engage in physical combat or flee the scene.

Neurological advances in recent years have enabled greater understanding of these processes. Goleman (1996) provides an account of the way the brain processes such a response to a dangerous or unclear stimulus. When the brain sees any stimulus, information is sent to the visual cortex at the back of the brain where it is analysed for meaning and an appropriate response. If the response is emotional, a signal goes to the amygdala in the lower brain to activate the emotional centres. However, a small amount of information also goes to a gland, the Thalamus, beforehand in a quicker response that allows a faster but less precise response if the stimulus is perceived as dangerous. The upper part of the brain, the neo cortex, where reasoning takes place is not involved. In cases where the stimulus is unclear or life threatening, it is difficult to involve the mediating part of the brain. Aronson (1999) argues this triggering process, though potentially useful is evidence of a primitive past, which is less frequently required by urban lifestyles. Goleman (1996) also suggests our responses to most stimuli are malleable and can be mediated; he also advocates the need to address emotional intelligence and the need to become adept at skilled social information processing to avoid unnecessarily destructive responses to conflicts.

The field of psychoanalysis theorises human beings as possessing innate aggressive drives. Storr (1989) gives an overview of Freud's writings on psychoanalysis. According to Storr (1989), Freud suggested humans are born with a life instinct (Eros) and a death instinct (Thanatos). Freud argued repression of the death instinct would cause it to turn inward, manifesting itself as neurosis, self-punishment and even suicide. He thus argued the need for the legitimate expression of aggression through sport, anger and argument. This theory is known as the hydraulic theory of aggression, suggesting that if this instinct builds up it becomes explosive. In some contrast, Dewey (1922) also viewed humans as being born with instincts. However these impulses are chaotic and unordered. Therefore, the individual turns to the group for lessons and endorsement in how to handle these impulses.

Over time, theories postulating that human beings have innate predispositions to aggression and violence have become discredited and understanding of these processes

has been enhanced by social learning theories (Groebel and Hinde 1989). Such theories, discussed by Cunningham (1998) and Segall (1989), posit that aggressive and violent responses to conflict are actually learned through processes of socialisation. In Seville, Spain 1986 (The Seville Statement on Violence 1986), a group of psychologists, neuroscientists, geneticists, anthropologists, and political scientists met to explore the sources of human aggression. This culminated in a declaration that there was no scientific basis yet for considering human beings as innately aggressive and consequently inevitably committed to violence and war. In a similar vein, the Children and Violence Report (Gulbenkian Foundation 1995) observed that violent conflict resolution is overwhelmingly a male problem. The roots of this appear to be social rather than biological (Hicks 1988). There are a number of theorists who suggest male violence may be associated with the reproduction of 'macho' values in schools (Epstein, Elwood, Hey, and Maw 1998, Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997, Salisbury and Jackson 1986).

If destructive responses to conflict are learned it is consistent to argue that strategies for constructive conflict resolution may also be learned and trained. Johnson and Johnson (1996) have shown pupils trained as peer mediators acquire and retain skills several months after their initial training and the implementation of peer mediation services in schools results in a decrease in inter-pupil conflicts referred to teachers for arbitration. Easterbrook et al (1992) describe how effective training encourages people to articulate perceived conflicts and develop their communication skills. This is an important process of negotiating mutually satisfying solutions (Presland 1996) and reframing any misunderstandings, which may have caused a conflict. There are a wealth of training manuals designed to develop skills of anger management, communication, cooperation and problem solving approaches to conflict with school children and young adults. These include Cohen (1995), Macbeth and Fine (1995), Mediation UK (1998), Rawlings (1996), Stacey and Robinson (1997) and Whitehouse and Pudney (1996) among many others. Programmes to develop conflict resolution skills in schools are discussed in part II of this review.



### *2.3.7 Conflict has developmental stages*

Conflict is often a component of development at a number of levels of analysis and understanding the phenomenon benefits from temporal analysis. Isenhardt and Spangle (2000) describe two families of theories, phase and transformational theories, which observe developmental stages. Phase theories observe that conflict goes through stages over time. For example, Pondy (1967) suggests that interpersonal conflicts follow set patterns, including stages of latent conflict (conditions), perceived conflict (cognition), felt conflict (affect), manifest conflict (behaviour) and a conflict aftermath, which become the history or antecedent conditions for future conflicts. Thomas (1976) and Katz and Lawyer (1993) present similar models. Transformational theories focus on processes of change rather than conflict itself. Conflict is seen as functional and its resolution is more concerned with transforming relationships, particularly when these relationships involve inequality or injustice (e.g. Azar 1986).

## **2.4 Part II: Ways of managing conflict resolution in schools**

To understand the impact of peer mediation services upon conflict resolution in schools it is necessary to have a general understanding of other approaches in schools. There is a deliberate emphasis from this point in the literature review on approaches in schools that manage the resolution of interpersonal conflicts and issues regarding their implementation. Although the study of peer mediation services in schools is likely to involve research at a number of levels of analysis it is appropriate to set some parameters at this stage. Peer mediation is a strategy for the resolution of inter-pupil conflicts. Therefore it is useful for the writer to be aware of other initiatives in schools for managing pupil welfare and teaching conflict resolution skills. Some types of conflict in the educational literature (e.g. pay disputes, role conflict, bullying between teachers) are not directly relevant to the research topic and hence are excluded from the review.

There are many interventions in schools, which attempt to prevent incidents of inter-pupil conflict or develop conflict resolution skills. Johnson and Johnson (1996) state that such programmes have proliferated in the United States due to an increasing concern regarding the violent nature of conflicts in schools. This concern is also shared, but to a lesser degree in the United Kingdom (Bentley 1996, Gulbenkian Foundation 1995, Griffith 1996, Hagedorn 1991). Interventions vary considerably in their aims. Many programmes view conflict as destructive and unwanted, therefore they attempt to reduce or suppress opportunities for its occurrence. Other programmes regard conflict as potentially constructive and educational and therefore emphasise its careful management.

Interventions also vary in their means of achieving these aims. Some give teachers greater authority to ‘control’ pupils whilst others equip pupils with the skills to take greater responsibility for resolving their own conflicts. These approaches differ in their emphasis on environmental factors, relationships and skills. Part II of the literature review discusses a number of interventions, which due to constraints on space are illustrative of the range of initiatives in school rather than comprehensive. Hence, the review of literature is organised into examples of those interventions that modify the environment (behaviourist interventions), attend to teacher communication and regulation (e.g. assertive discipline and dialogical approaches to behaviour management), provide an education about conflict resolution through the curriculum, including citizenship, initiatives within pastoral care (e.g. circle time, peer support and training) and whole school cultural approaches. Peer mediation occupies a place alongside those approaches that develop pupils’ knowledge and skills and give them responsibility for managing conflict resolution for themselves. Peer mediation training can overlap with some of the approaches outlined (e.g. peace education, citizenship, circle time) and these connections will be highlighted in part III of this review.

#### *2.4.1 Behaviourist interventions*

Behaviourism theorises that only the actions of individuals can be reliably studied. The work of Skinner (1938) emphasised how human action can be manipulated by adjustments to environmental stimuli. According to Roderick, Pitchford and Miller (1997), the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a sustained focus on the behaviour of pupils in schools and the introduction of behaviourist style programmes from the United States. Such approaches viewed conflict as destructive and disruptive, favouring its reduction or elimination. These approaches have brought into question the relationship between the physical environment and behaviour (BCC 1997, Lewis 1998) and how teachers reward, ignore and classify rules (Moss 1998). Such interventions downplay the mediational nature of behaviour in emphasising desired responses to environmental stimuli and incentives.

One of the first research investigations in the UK in this area was conducted by Merrett and Wheldall (1978), which utilised applied behaviour analysis (Baer et al 1968). This describes the introduction of a game into a classroom, whereby the teacher would distribute points at random intervals to pupils observed as behaving in accordance with classroom rules. The intervention had a positive impact on reducing ‘inappropriate’ behaviour in class. Similarly, but more recently, Roderick et al (1997) have shown a comparable impact on playground behaviour through the distribution of raffle tickets in reward for behaviour observed by lunchtime supervisors as consistent with playground rules. In this latter case there was a significant reduction in inter-pupil conflicts observed. In other studies, Lewis (1998), Parkin and Klein (1999) and Ross and Ryan (1993) have shown how redesigning playgrounds and the reintroduction of traditional games to occupy pupil time have helped encourage a higher frequency of play spent non-violently at breaktimes.

The concern about such projects is the deliberate emphasis on environmental factors as determinants of behaviour. Roderick et al (1997) are among the advocates of the approach, who acknowledge this limitation. The positive behaviour witnessed is

encouraged by the motivation of reward, although this is commonly reduced or removed over time (e.g. Merrett and Wheldall 1978). Hence, such projects are criticised for being successful only over a short period of time and for being highly situated. In contrast, Kohlberg (Munsey 1980), Kohlberg and Mayer (1972), Hicks (1988) and more recently Bentley (1998) advocate that the learning of social skills, such as conflict resolution skills, should be experiential. This should start with children's real life experiences; offering them genuine and authentic experiences of responsibility at school, including the management of their own disputes. Behaviourist interventions, like adult-applied quick fix solutions (Goleman 1996, Griffith 1996) squander such opportunities for learning.

#### *2.4.2 Communication and regulation*

Bernstein (2000) has drawn attention to the relationship between social relations, principles of communication and the regulation of opportunities for thinking and acting. Bernstein questions,

how do principles of power and control translate into principles of communication and how do these principles of communication differentially regulate forms of consciousness with respect to their reproduction and the possibilities for change?  
(Bernstein 2000, p. 18).

This review presents two contrasting examples of principles of communication used by teachers, underpinned by fundamentally different principles of power and control. The first example, assertive discipline, posits the teacher with authority in arbitrating all conflict. The second example, dialogic approaches to communication, posits a more equal relationship between parties in the exploration of alternative resolutions to a conflict. These approaches can also be applied to relationships between the school and its wider community.

*a) Assertive discipline*

Based on behavioural approaches, a number of schools have adopted the UK government backed 'Assertive Discipline' (DfEE 1997). This approach views conflict as disruptive to education and attempts to empower teachers with the means to manage order more efficiently. The principal strategy advocates that conduct is clearly set out via displayed classroom rules (Moss 1998). Following these rules results in rewards and challenging them results in sanctions (Zirpoli and Melloy 1993). The intervention focuses on the rules of the school, which are often written and regulated by adults and hence usually non-negotiable. Wragg (1994) suggests pupils and parents are re-assured by order and that the adoption of such an approach is associated with creating calmer school environments where disruption, including aggression and violence, is less frequent and learning is more likely to take place. It is however prone to the same criticisms as other behavioural interventions. Also, many pupils experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) find such rigid rules too demanding (Apter 1982, Cole et al 1998).

Mitina (1990) highlights a range of teacher behaviours, which may exacerbate experiences of interpersonal conflict at school. These include:

- typecasting of pupil behaviour and performance;
- inconsistent application of rules;
- escalation of situations due to the immediate use of sanctions;
- setting tasks at an inappropriate difficulty;
- humiliating pupils in front of peers;
- giving rules which are not easy to follow and ignoring instances that need to be dealt with.

Cole, Sellman, Daniels and Visser (2001) outline a number of teacher qualities, which are instrumental in developing effective relationships with pupils and managing conflict. These include being well organised, fair, consistent, respectful, adaptable, stimulating, warm, in possession of a good sense of humour and temperament. MacGrath (1998) also

outlines a number of basic strategies associated with ‘peaceful’ teaching. These include a number of practical recommendations:

- ensuring that lessons are well prepared and delivered,
- setting clear boundaries for acceptable behaviour,
- being vigilant at times when conflict is more likely,
- maintaining a calm atmosphere across the school, and
- rewarding good behaviour.

Galloway (2003) argues that training teachers in such basic practices can be a more effective means of intervention than various anti-bullying initiatives. This is because teachers find it easier to incorporate these strategies into everyday practice, which in turn have a significant impact on pupil behaviour. In a survey of ‘mainstream’ provision for pupils experiencing EBD, Daniels et al (1998) observed assertive discipline and the frequent use of behaviourist systems of points and rewards to motivate and control pupils. However these were actually balanced with therapeutic and meta-cognitive approaches to behaviour management. Such modification gives rigid systems a ‘human touch’ and greater reflexivity. Such approaches to behaviour management advocate greater pupil involvement in the regulation of school rules.

#### *b) Dialogic approaches*

Whereas the strategies described in the previous two sections may be effective means of creating order and harmony in schools, MacGrath (1998) argues that schools need to go beyond these recommendations and teach children social skills, including anger management. These skills should be modelled consistently by teachers, demonstrating negotiation skills in the resolution of both inter-pupil and teacher-pupil conflicts. Pupils then experience participation in the generation of solutions to everyday problems rather than having decisions made and imposed on their behalf. This type of two-way communication is more ‘dialogic’ in contrast to assertive discipline. MacGrath (1998)

advocates a number of further strategies for teachers to adopt when in a conflict situation with a pupil. These include:

- Considering that a pupil is on the same side and empathising with them.
- The conflict issues are the problem, not the pupil.
- Staying impartial and not becoming involved with the content of what is said, i.e. focused on a solution.
- Being attentive to language that may escalate a conflict.
- Staying calm, maintaining relaxed and non-threatening body posture.
- Being flexible with discipline.

These points are also emphasised by Cole et al (1998), who state that

when transgressions occur, the behaviour and not the child should be condemned... the reasons for the child's actions should be investigated. The pupil has the right to express his or her views, to have staff available who can listen, comfort and advise...

Cole et al (1998, p. 115)

Approaches to behaviour management vary from school to school. Perhaps, mainstream schools have a lot to learn from the alternative/special school sector; where due to the more challenging nature of some of their pupils' behaviour there is greater emphasis on dialogical communication. Pomeroy (2000) constructs contrasting models of schools and pupil referral units (education sites for children excluded or at risk of exclusion from school and/or experiencing EBD) as social organisations. Schools are presented as hierarchical organisations. They are arenas for competing versions of reality, where the authoritative discourse is produced by the school, teachers dominate the interpretation of events and there is little opportunity for the voice of the pupil. The value system of the school defines the 'borders' of acceptable behaviour, presenting a challenge to some students. These students may respond to such organisation by rejecting the school's value system and defining their own. Subscription to different sets of values may mean that experiences of failure and confrontation are further exacerbated.

In contrast, Pomeroy (2000) presents pupil referral units as less hierarchical. The smaller student population allows for the development of more harmonious relationships, identified as integral to effective provision by Cole et al (1998, 2001) and Daniels et al (1998). In such an environment, there is greater opportunity for listening and sharing and the equal treatment of students by staff, which allows them to feel more valued (Klein 1999). Visser et al (2000) state that participation is crucial in the development and regulation of a behaviour policy. This enables pupils to see that the norms of behaviour are not simply imposed from above but involve a degree of negotiation in both their realisation and maintenance.

Participation in the creation of a school's behaviour policy can be extended to parents as well as pupils, whose role in the management of children's behaviour cannot be underestimated. Peterson and Skiba (2000) discuss a number of strategies for engaging the cooperation of parents with schools regarding the promotion of non-violence, home-school contracts being one example. Rather than being aloof and autocratic, Bentley (1998) argues that effective schools harness dialogical communication in building a school community where norms are mutually constructed and sustained. Bentley (1998) describes one school's attempt to integrate norms and rules into a collective orientation.

Many schools publish statements about their values and missions, especially as they become more adept at marketing themselves to parents and the outside world. But the ones that truly reflect the ethos of the school, and are understood and owned by every member from nursery and reception classes to the headteacher and the governors, are those which have been debated and written out by everyone affected by them. For example, Colombia Primary School in London has a behaviour policy, written by its staff and pupils, and posted all over the school. It symbolises a careful process of reflection, discussion and synthesis, which has been actively considered by every member of the school community. As a piece of paper, or a set of rules, it has limited value. But as a contribution to a shared ethos, and to the strengthening of positive norms of behaviour and the reasons which lie behind them, it is a much greater achievement. It marks a point where rules overlap with norms, and shows the responsibility for sustaining these norms lies with every individual. Some schools have extended this process even further, consulting members of the wider community on their statement of values, involving parents, employers, spiritual leaders and local residents, and extending the values and identity of the school beyond its walls.

(Bentley 1998, p.64)



In this description, Bentley (1998) emphasises the importance of a cohesive and mutually supportive community. The effective management of behaviour is endorsed by dialogue between all subjects with a stake in the system. As a result, a culture of shared values enhances the likelihood of individuals co-operating with school rules (Daniels et al 1998).

#### *2.4.3 Curriculum*

Conflict and conflict resolution, from both the interpersonal to the global, may form the content of one or a series of lessons. For example, Katz and Lawyer (1994) argue that conflict resolution skills are underpinned by a thorough knowledge of the dynamics of conflict and potential strategies for its constructive resolution. Principles of non-violence may also be explored via curriculum themes (e.g. Carter and Osler 2000, Hicks 1988, 1999, 2001, Vriens 1997). These may include such topics as ‘media literacy’ (Hartley 1997), so the education about violence provided by television and cinema can be reframed more accurately (Josephson 1987, Kniveton 1986, Lagerspetz 1989). Johnson and Johnson (1994) advocate that pupils’ academic education should include learning to deal with controversies. Not only does this increase pupils’ motivation to learn, it also develops critical thinking skills integral to developing a problem solving approach to conflict.

Smith and Sharp (1994) and Peterson and Skiba (2000) argue that tackling bullying and violence through the curriculum alone appears to have limited value. This is often because of a lack of opportunity to engage with the issues and materials explored regarding the topic (Cowie and Sharp 1994). In the writer’s own teaching experience, it has not been uncommon to witness schools attempting to address bullying by playing a single video. Approaches that involve pupils regularly over their school careers (e.g. circle time) appear to have more positive results. A component of this may be the

development of greater reflexivity regarding the issues at hand and the welfare of those involved (Morris 1999).

A number of theorists from a variety of paradigms (Bernstein 2000, Bourdieu and Passeron 2000, Wertsch 1991, 1998, Willis 1977) turn to the broader notion of 'pedagogy' to relate the structure and communication of curriculum to matters of social order. These theories return to the notion of the 'hidden curriculum' (Illich 1971), a concept that implies pupils learn a number of covert lessons about social relations. Kenway & Fitzclarence (1997) and Salisbury and Jackson (1996) argue that connections exist between schooling and violence. They suggest principles of school organisation and pedagogic practice endorse macho values, which promote hegemony and violence in wider society. Salisbury and Jackson (1996) suggest that schools tolerate and even encourage competitiveness, aggression and the view that boys must be naturally violent. Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) are scathing in their attack of the role of pedagogy in schools reproducing violence. They argue,

if schools implicitly subscribe to and endorse hegemonic versions of masculinity, particularly in their more exaggerated forms, then they are complicit in the production of violence. If they fear the 'feminine' and avoid and discourage empathetic, compassionate, nurturant and affiliative behaviours and emotional responsibility and instead favour heavy-handed discipline and control then they are complicit. If they seek to operate only at the level of rationality and if they rationalise violence then they are complicit. If they are structured in such a way as to endorse the culture of male entitlement and indicate that the needs of males are more important than those of females then they are complicit. If they are repressive in their adult/child relations and do not offer adolescent students in particular opportunities to develop wise judgements and to exercise their autonomy in responsible ways then they are complicit. If they operate in such a way as to marginalise and stigmatise certain groups of students then they are complicit.

(Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997, p. 125)

Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) suggest schools need radical transformation if they are to genuinely promote non-violence. Values such as equality need to permeate every aspect of schooling. They also suggest that autocratic school cultures reproduce violence. Instead, pupils need to be given appropriate forms of autonomy so they can learn to

resolve conflict for themselves. To begin to address some of these issues, Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) argue that the first thing in need of remedy is the absence of anti-violence from the educational agenda. Resolving these issues has to go beyond tokenistic lessons and small-scale interventions:

Attending to school culture is not a popular approach in anti-violence programmes in schools. Most approaches draw their insights from psychology. This has meant that they have concentrated on the personal and interpersonal and small scale.

(Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997, p. 126)

Often, the pastoral care system of a school is left to pick up the pieces of bullying and violence in schools, with them being attributed as naturally occurring phenomena (Cooper and Upton 1991, Power 1996, Salisbury and Jackson 1996). In other cases, violence in schools has often been attributed to naughty individuals and ‘bad’ classes. This, according to Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) is scapegoating. Thomas and Glenny (2000) make a similar argument, suggesting that the practice of labelling ‘challenging’ pupils as having EBD attributes causality with the individual rather than the institution.

Hicks’ (1988) championing of peace education has acknowledged pedagogical issues by recognising the distinction between curriculum content and process. Hicks (1988, 1999) distinguishes between ‘education about peace’ and ‘education for peace’. Education about peace infers notions of curriculum content. However, as Hicks (1988, p. 11) outlines, it is not ‘about a separate subject but the creation of a dimension across the curriculum’. Hicks (1988) elaborates,

If one is teaching *for* peace and not merely *about* peace, a close relationship needs to exist between ends and means, content and form. If one is concerned about developing self-respect, appreciation of others, concepts of justice and non-violence, they must also be part of the process of learning itself. This puts the teacher in the role of facilitator rather than in authority, creating a person-centred learning climate which involves much more than just the intellect.

(Hicks 1988, p. 17, italics in original)

Hicks (1988) emphasises the crucial role of process as well as content in designing educational activities. Educating ‘for’ peace involves the development of a range of skills (critical thinking, cooperation, empathy, non-aggressive assertiveness, political literacy as well as conflict resolution), attitudes (respect for self and others, open-mindedness, vision and commitment to justice) as well as knowledge about conflict, peace, equality, power and justice. A number of these ideas have been reiterated by Hicks’ (1999, 2001) development of the field into global education to include a greater emphasis on ecological issues. The emphasis on curriculum process as well as content implies a model of learning that is experiential and participatory. The implication of this argument is that for children to learn conflict resolution skills they need to have the opportunity to practice them in real life. This position informs an interpretation of the guidance that accompanies the introduction of Citizenship education in England and Wales, the topic of the next section.

#### *2.4.4 Citizenship*

Citizenship is a recent National Curriculum subject, which became mandatory for all secondary schools in England and Wales in 2002. Primary schools are to follow shortly. Its aims, according to Clough and Holden (2002), endorse the political values of pluralism and democracy. The documentation that accompanies the guidance (e.g. QCA 1998) calls teachers to affirm commitment to the teaching of a ‘common’ set of values: truth, honesty, trust and a sense of duty. Although many theorists and practitioners welcome its innovation, some are sceptical about its far from neutral content (e.g. Pearce and Hallgarten 2000) and its aims (Bentley 1998). However, it is relevant to this literature review because it is the first governmental guidance to explicitly recommend that conflict resolution skills should be taught. The guidance on its introduction makes a similar distinction between education ‘about’ citizenship and education ‘for’ citizenship, as did Hicks (1988) regarding peace education.

We stress, however, that citizenship education is education for citizenship, behaving and acting as a citizen, therefore it is not just knowledge of citizenship and civic society, it also implies developing values, skills and understanding.

(QCA 1998, p.13)

This has implications for the way schools are organised,

Schools need to consider to what extent their ethos, organisation and daily practices are consistent with the aim and purpose of citizenship education, and provide opportunities for pupils to develop into active citizens...

(QCA 1998, p 55)

Thus, if the QCA guidance is interpreted accurately, schools are required to relate their organisation and pedagogic practice to a broader and more active notion of education, which emphasises the experiential as well as the intellectual. How schools attempt to do this is left to themselves. A practical guide for teachers by Clough and Holden (2002) contains a wealth of examples to bring education for citizenship ideas into action. These include school councils, school parliaments and peer mediation services, some of which are discussed separately in parts II and III of the literature review.

#### *2.4.5 Pastoral care*

Pastoral care in UK schools is provided by both the delivery of 'personal, health and social education' (PHSE) as a discrete subject and the breaking down of large schools into smaller family groups (Power 1996). Although pastoral care can be a tool for pupil empowerment and support, it is often associated with issues of power. Whereas teachers frequently provide valuable moral support to individuals, Cooper and Upton (1990, 1991) have noted how pastoral staff in secondary schools can act as buffers between pupils' social and emotional needs and other functions of the school. Similarly, Salisbury and Jackson (1996) state that systems of pastoral care are left to pick up the pieces of violence and bullying actually promoted by academic aspects of schooling. Power (1996) further

criticises the way pastoral care can be used to modify 'deviant' behaviour in academic classes, and regulate behaviour through the employment of surveillance strategies (e.g. report cards). Hence, the 'opposition' between the academic and the pastoral can preserve and reinforce academic authority.

The relationship between the pastoral and the academic was discussed at a conference organised by the Blaker Foundation in March 2000 (Blaker Foundation 2000). One of the themes of the conference was the conflict between a 'culture of care' and a 'culture of external accountability' in schools. The former may include the priorities of many educationalists with nurturing the broad development of pupils. The latter is more likely to be a priority for school administrators and politicians, more concerned about competition between schools in league tables of examination results. The arguments of speakers at the conference suggested that these cultures need coordinating. For example, if schools need to be 'accountable', measures of 'school effectiveness' should be extended to incorporate indicators of broader educational development and matters of social order, such as inclusiveness (Mental Health Foundation 1999). This intersection of school functions is echoed by Power (1996), who argues that the pastoral and academic need to entwine like a rope.

Despite these criticisms, there are a number of interventions delivered under the umbrella of pastoral care, which attempt to respond to inter-pupil conflict or train pupils with conflict resolution skills. A number of these are now discussed, which utilise the role of peers rather than adults in providing pastoral support. These initiatives can be placed within a 'No Blame Approach' to problem behaviour (Maines and Robinson 1992). Tyler (1998) states that such approaches require teachers to put aside their feelings of initial anger and repugnance to stress non-punitive responses to problem behaviour. Instead, they attempt to engage the cooperation of pupils in generating and implementing practical solutions to problems.

*a) Circle time*

Circle time (Mosley 1993, 1996) gives pupils an opportunity to sit in a group circle and discuss issues of importance, which may include the antecedents or after-effects of conflicts. Equality is emphasised by all pupils and adults sitting at the same height, away from their desks and taking turns to talk. Circle time can be used to deliver a programme of a range of activities to raise self-esteem, develop communication skills and foster trust and cooperation within a group. Morris (1999) argues that circle time is an ideal format for managing the social dynamics of a classroom and developing a co-operative group. One of the strengths of circle time is how it develops group reflexivity to tasks and the well being of members of the class. It does this by making the group responsible for their own success and cohesion. Critiques of circle time (Housego and Burns 1994, Lang 1998) have highlighted that activities have to be well planned and structured for such ownership to take place. Simply allowing a group to ‘chat’ is insufficient. Yet, when well delivered, Moss and Wilson (1998) have shown how circle time can improve a group’s social interaction. One such dividend was children getting to know more members of their class, which had an impact on how other pupils were rated on popularity surveys.

*b) Peer support and training*

A number of interventions empower pupils with training in conflict resolution skills. Some schools use pupils to support their peers in a variety of ways. As examples, peer support and training are discussed in turn. A thorough discussion of peer mediation is reserved for part III of this literature review.

To offer pupils opportunities to develop self-regulation, there has been a steady growth in conflict resolution programmes that give pupils greater responsibilities (Bentley 1996). These programmes attempt to equip individuals with strategies to help them support their peers. Examples include peer mentoring (O’Connell 1995), peer counselling (Kaye and Webb 1996, McNamara 1996, Sharp, Sellars and Cowie 1994) and peer mediation

(Unwin and Osei 2000). These types of intervention provide support from within the pupils' immediate community, peers, rather than adults. 'Bullyline', a peer counselling service discussed by Sharp and Cowie (1994) highlights the problems schools have in encouraging children to talk about issues with members of staff. One advantage of peer projects is pupils appear more willing to trust each other, not least because they are less likely to receive sanctions. The literature also suggests adults rarely have sufficient time to devote to inter-pupil conflicts and can sometimes perceive as trivial what is important to children and young people (Rawlings 1996).

There are a number of initiatives that have sought to train pupils in conflict resolution skills (Bentley 1996) or related skills such as social skills (Bullock 1988, Cross and Goddard 1988, McFall 1982), negotiation skills (Presland 1996), thinking skills (Dawes et al 2000, Hymans 1994) and anger management (Douglas 1999, Goldstein 1989a, Macbeth and Fine 1995, Whitehouse and Pudney 1996). Training in such skills frequently make use of a number of practical strategies children can use in real situations, sometimes practiced in role-play (e.g. Macbeth and Fine 1995, Whitehouse and Pudney 1996). One example is the 'Anger Rules' (Douglas 1999). This strategy advocates a non-violent approach to conflict through analogy to traffic lights (Red: Stop, Amber: Think, and Green: Do). The use of such mediational devices encourages children to extend the thinking time between action and reaction, described by Goleman (1996) as a crucial ingredient of emotional intelligence and the management of relationships.

Research into the effectiveness of such training is limited but yields encouraging results. Guralnick (1989) and Cross and Goddard (1989) have shown children are receptive to such training and particularly so at an early age. Opatow (1991) has provided evidence, which suggests that pupils trained in conflict resolution skills realise some of the potentially constructive as well as the destructive aspects of conflict.



#### *2.4.6 Whole school cultural approaches*

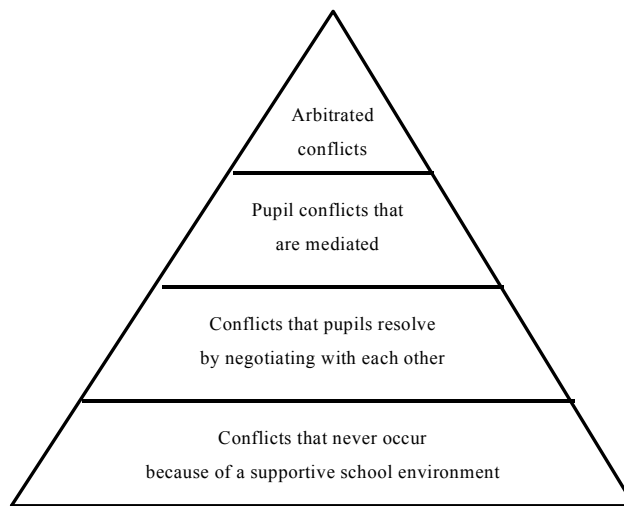
Salisbury and Jackson (1996) argue that tackling violence in schools requires a whole-school approach. This is so the school is seen as a consistent community that will not tolerate violence. They suggest that schools need to examine the relationship between aggressive behaviour and their own organisation, policies, discipline and teaching styles. Individual intervention strategies by themselves tend to have a limited impact (Sharp and Thompson 1994). This notion is also the chief recommendation of Smith and Sharp's (1994) extensive research into bullying. Sharp and Thompson (1994) recognise that an effective whole-school approach requires a huge investment of time and effort by everyone within a school community. Initially, the need for a whole school approach needs to be firmly established, which should incorporate the consultation of the wider community (Bentley 1998). This involvement should continue into its implementation. Then, the school will need to find ideas and resources to re-promote the principles underpinning the whole school approach in order to maintain its high profile. The initiative will also need regular monitoring, evaluation, and modification where necessary.

Cole, Visser and Daniels (1999), Visser et al (2000) suggest that effective provision for pupils exhibiting challenging behaviour, including violence and aggression are those that do not 'give up' on children and persevere in the search for improved models of behaviour management and means of addressing pupils' wider needs. There is dialogue, direction and cohesion within the school, which extends to external agencies and the community served by the school. There is participation in framing behaviour management policy and its implementation is a continuous cycle of application, review and modification (Daniels et al 1998, Daniels et al 2000).

Theorists (e.g. Daniels et al 1998, Sharp and Thompson 1994) have often employed the concept of 'critical mass' to suggest that whole school cultural change needs the initial and ongoing support of at least a few influential members of the school community. This

does not have to be every individual but a sufficient proportion to propel and maintain change. Spalding, Kastrike and Jennessen (2001) reiterate this notion, adding that schools need to take ownership of change processes. Gaining and maintaining such support is not always easy. However, Sharp and Thompson (1994) present evidence of effective whole school policies having tangible reductions in violent incidents within a year, when there is sufficient commitment. Although, such change may be less immediate at secondary schools.

Cohen (1995) proposes an ideal system of conflict resolution in schools, which adopts a whole school cultural approach, shown in figure 2.5. The spatial proportioning of each level of the diagram is meant to indicate the relative frequency of the corresponding approach to conflict resolution, i.e. arbitration of conflicts should occur least. The model integrates a number of the interventions described previously and peer mediation, which is yet to be discussed.



**Figure 2.5: The ideal system of conflict resolution in schools (Cohen 1995, p. 35)**

Cohen's (1995) model suggests the majority of time in school should be free from destructive conflicts, because of a supportive school environment. What constitutes such an environment is not elucidated. A tool to aid such a process is the Forum on Children and Violence's (1999) 'Checkpoints' questionnaire, which can be used to complete an audit of the whole school. The questionnaire contains a number of recommendations derived from a review of literature about preventing and responding to violence in schools. These recommendations are organised under six headings: community relationships, values, organisation, environment, curriculum and training, which schools indicate are in place, proposed or not in place. The school can then identify areas for development.

There are a number of practices reviewed in the literature within this chapter, which could subsume the characteristics of the 'supportive environment' Cohen (1995) refers to. These include:

- cooperation between the school and the community in developing policies (Bentley 1998, Visser et al 2000),
- values of cooperation and non-violence, which permeate all school relationships and teaching styles (Smith and Thompson 1994, Daniels et al 1998),
- principles of school organisation and pedagogic practice built upon notions of equality, inclusiveness and non-violence (Armstrong, Armstrong and Barton 2000, Daniels et al 1998, Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997),
- an environment that is conducive to co-operative behaviour (Branco 2001, Parkin and Klein 1999, Ross and Ryan 1993),
- a curriculum that attends to issues of both content and process (Katz and Lawyer 1994, Hicks 1988, QCA 1998) in developing conflict resolution skills, and
- pupils being given both the training and opportunity to learn how to resolve conflicts for themselves.

The rest of Cohen's (1995) model suggests that when conflicts do arise, pupils and teachers have the necessary skills to resolve them independently and constructively. Presland (1996) argues that in order to ensure pupils learn these skills they need to receive training. If resolution by negotiation is difficult, pupils should then have an opportunity to have their conflicts mediated by their peers (Silcock and Stacey 1996, Stacey 1996, Tyrell and Farrell 1995). If resolution is still difficult, conflicts can be arbitrated. Cohen's (1995) model suggests that a whole approach, which supports the development of conflict resolution skills, requires a composite of interventions.

## **2.5 Part III: Peer mediation**

Although peer mediation was introduced in chapter one, part III of this literature review is devoted to discussing such services in schools in greater detail. Part III is structured into four sections. The first section outlines peer mediation as a specific form of conflict resolution and contrasts it to other approaches such as arbitration. The second section charts the historical development of peer mediation and how it has become established at some schools in the UK. The third section discusses the implementation of peer mediation in schools, outlining the training given to pupils and how services are set up and run on a daily basis. The fourth and final section presents the findings from what little research has been completed and published about peer mediation.

### *2.5.1 Peer mediation as specific form of collaborative conflict resolution*

Isenhardt and Spangle (2000) discuss three common approaches to collaborative conflict resolution in organisations. These are negotiation, mediation and arbitration. The latter two approaches are usually reserved for conflicts that are difficult to resolve because they involve third parties. Cohen (1995) states that proceeding from negotiation to mediation to arbitration becomes increasingly formal with greater authority assigned to the third

party. There is a more equal balance of power in mediation as peer mediators only facilitate the process, giving the onus to disputants to generate their own solutions to their conflict. In arbitration the third party has the power to adjudicate the conflict and determine any action to be taken. Cohen (1995) compares mediation with arbitration, as shown in figure 2.6.

	<b>Mediation</b>	<b>Arbitration</b>
Distribution of Power	Disputants retain power over the process and outcome	Arbitrator retains power over the process and outcome
Impartiality	Mediators guard against taking sides	Arbitrators may aspire to impartiality, but often have obligations to the system in which they work
Third Party Judgements	Mediators remain non-judgemental throughout the process	Arbitrators' primary function is to formulate a sound judgement about the disputants' situation
Disciplinary Function	Non-punitive	Punitive. Arbitrators often have power to enforce punishment
Temporal Orientation	Future-orientated	Focus on past actions, and blame
Winners and Losers	'Win-win' solutions based on negotiation and compromise	Solutions imposed by arbitrator may make one or both disputants feel like losers
Voluntariness	Voluntary participation in process	Participation often mandatory
Definition of the Dispute	Dispute defined by the disputants, underlying issues teased out and explored.	Arbitrators define the dispute in accordance with rules they are expected to uphold
Confidentiality	Disputants informed in advance of limits to confidentiality	Confidentiality often not raised as an issue

**Figure 2.6: Mediation and arbitration (based on Cohen 1995, p.29)**

Figure 2.6 summarises the key differences between mediation and arbitration. Stacey, Robinson and Cremin (1997) describe these differences in terms of their orientation to the dispute. Arbitration is generally located within a punitive disciplinary framework common to hierarchical organisations. Arbitration places the conflict in the past and attempts to identify a party to blame for the conflict and assign retribution. Although, in some cases parties may voluntarily seek arbitration and are happy to accept a judgement. In contrast, mediation is located within a restorative disciplinary framework, often used in situations where relationships are interdependent (e.g. family, neighbours, friends). The emphasis of this approach to conflict resolution is on repairing any damage done to each other and/or ensuring the relationship is not harmful in the future. Rather than administering punishment, the role of the mediator is to facilitate this process and encourage disputants to generate their own solutions to the problem.

Most pupils in schools only have a choice between two possibilities for resolving their conflicts. These are to resolve the conflict themselves (negotiation) or either voluntarily or involuntarily have adults resolve them on their behalf (arbitration). Either possibility is problematic. Pupils choosing to negotiate their own conflicts frequently lack the knowledge and skills to do this and either avoid resolving the conflict or resolve it with violence or aggression (Isenhardt and Spangle 2000, Opatow 1991). The problem with adults arbitrating conflict is they frequently don't have sufficient time to dedicate to the process and sometimes perceive the matters of dispute as trivial (Rawlings 1996). Hence, they may also leave the matter unresolved or apply a quick fix solution (Goleman 1996). Quick fixes may not address the issues that caused a conflict and/or may be considered unfair because each pupil's viewpoints have not been adequately considered. In the latter case, adult involvement may actually increase conflict by stoking up resentment.

Peer mediation offers a number of advantages to the resolution of difficult conflicts (Johnson and Johnson 1996). First, its training equips pupils with conflict resolution skills that may be useful in settling their own disputes. Second, it creates a pool of mediators who are prepared to assist peers experiencing a conflict and dedicate sufficient time to its resolution. Acland (1990) regards peer mediation as more effective than

arbitration in schools because its voluntary nature allows disputants a risk-free opportunity to find out more about the other disputant's position. It is also cost-effective, fast and finds common-sense solutions.

### *2.5.2 The history of peer mediation in schools*

Conflict resolution programmes in schools, including peer mediation, first emerged in American schools in the early 1970s (Tyrell and Farrell 1995). This was preceded by a growing interest in the subject of conflict resolution as an academic discipline since the Second World War and a peace movement that grew in momentum during the 1960s (Cohen 1995, Stacey, Robinson and Cremin 1997). Isenhardt and Spangle (2000) recall how the Quakers were instrumental in implementing such programmes and describes the Children's Project for Friends, as the first to teach principles of non-violence in New York schools. Since then, Isenhardt and Spangle (2000) estimate there are over 6,000 conflict resolution programmes in schools in the United States at the approach of the millennium. This promulgation has been accompanied and influenced by the steady growth of mediation over the same period of time as a less expensive and highly successful alternative to litigation in settling family, community and business disputes. Stacey et al (1997) state that peer mediation in the United States was initially seen as an additional tool that detracted little from existing structures of conflict management in school. The training was seen to have a clear developmental sequence with a visible end product, making it very marketable in contrast to peace education, which was seen as ambiguous and politically charged (Tyrell and Farrell 1995).

During the late 1980s and the 1990s the use of peer mediation spread to other parts of the world. It was already prevalent in North America, Oceania and becoming more common in Europe (Isenhardt and Spangle 2000). In the UK, through the Quakers once more, WMQPEP and the Kingston Friends Workshop Group were among the first to introduce peer mediation from the United States into UK schools (Tyrell and Farrell 1995). There

was a simultaneous interest in conflict resolution training and peer mediation in Northern Ireland as part of the Education for Mutual Understanding project (Tyrrell 1995).

### *2.5.3 The implementation of peer mediation services in schools*

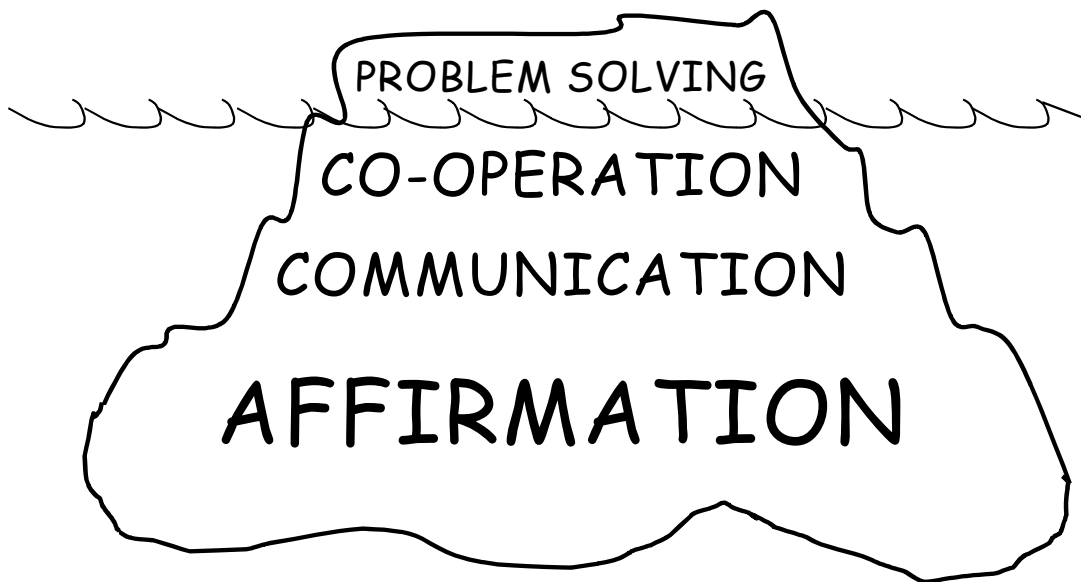
The process of peer mediation is similar to that offered via a range of services to adults. All mediation is underpinned by offering disputants the opportunity to reach a mutually satisfying outcome facilitated by neutral third-parties. In schools, this process is aided by a script used by peer mediators, which formalises mediation's four distinct stages. These are: 1) setting the scene, explaining the process and agreeing to the ground rules, 2) hearing both sides of the story with an emphasis on how each person is feeling, 3) generating possible solutions to the dispute and 4) an agreement (Cohen 1995).

To get to the point where a peer mediation service is up and running, a school must resolve a number of practical difficulties, such as who is selected for training and when is this to be delivered. Pupils are normally selected for peer mediation training during the latter years of their primary education or at anytime during their secondary education. They usually mediate for children the same age or younger, and work in pairs or small teams. Stacey et al (1997) give one example of top infant children being trained as peer mediators. However, the type of mediation offered is limited to listening to each other's feelings and agreeing simple solutions. Older children are more able to provide a neutral and non-judgemental service (Stacey et al 1997). Junior children can help disputants to understand the nature of the problem, each other's points of view, and choose a mutually satisfying solution. Secondary pupils may even be able to use their greater maturity and skills of perception to help disputants identify underlying issues and unexpressed needs before generating a solution.

To establish a peer mediation service, pupils need training in foundational conflict resolution skills and mediation. This is often delivered in two stages. Pupils receive initial training in conflict resolution skills and are introduced to the mediation process before



nominating themselves or others for additional training. There exists a wealth of training manuals to support the development of peer mediation in schools at either stage. These include Cohen (1995), Macbeth and Fine (1995), Mediation UK (1998), Rawlings (1996), Stacey and Robinson (1997) and Whitehouse and Pudney (1996), among many others. In all of these manuals, peer mediation training is delivered via circle time (Mosley 1993, 1996) with a mix of didactic and experiential exercises. Pupils are given a basic understanding of conflict and its resolution (Katz and Lawyer 1994) and participate in a number of activities designed to develop cooperation and communication within the group (Morris 1999). Additional training provides an opportunity for peer mediators to bond as a group and rehearse their skills (Stacey and Robinson 1997). Each of these manuals draw upon what is referred to as the ‘iceberg principle’ (Perkins 1989), shown in figure 2.7. This emphasises a problem solving approach to conflict underpinned by skills in affirmation, communication and cooperation (de Reuck 1983, Kelman 1983).



**Figure 2.7: The iceberg principle (based on Perkins 1989)**

Training activities in conflict resolution skills and peer mediation emphasise one or a multiple of the skills identified in figure 2.7. A number of games and challenges are included to develop cooperation and communication in the group (e.g. Mashedier 1989). Communication activities pay particular attention to the development of key mediation skills such as listening and reflecting back, and using language that prevents the escalation of conflict such as ensuring 'put-downs' are not used by disputants (e.g. Mediation UK 1998).

Each of the manuals emphasise the importance of developing affirmation within the group. Having mutual self-respect and respect for others is seen as the bedrock of healthy relationships and as a skill that can be learnt (Rawlings 1996). The first step in developing affirmation is to build up a sense of personal identity that is both accurate and positive. The second step, for many school children is overcoming the embarrassment of saying and recognising the positive things about themselves and others. Many children who have experienced little praise and warmth can find this difficult, thus the affirmation needs to be given and taken genuinely. An example of an affirmation activity is the game 'sleeping hedgehog', where a pupil has to guess who is hiding beneath a blanket from the affirmative things, which are said about them (Sellman 2000). 'Rounds', where pupils talk in turn on a common theme or question are also valuable opportunities for children to hear how each other are feeling and develop reflexivity about the welfare of the group (Morris 1999).

Tyrrell (1995) argues that it is essential that adult members of staff, including lunchtime supervisors are included in the training. Although peer mediators take a large degree of responsibility for running their own service, such members of staff often act as gatekeepers for the service and are needed to oversee its smooth running. Peer mediation, like many other initiatives, is unlikely to be successful unless it is part of a whole school approach (Cohen 1995, Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997, Sharp and Thompson 1994). Stacey et al (1997) argue that peer mediation services need to be integrated into school life rather than

being a ‘bolt-on’ feature. Peer mediation needs to be included in a school’s development plan, its policies on behaviour management, anti-bullying, and pastoral care to offer a consistent model of ways of dealing with conflict constructively.

Once the training is completed, most peer mediation services take place at lunchtimes, usually in a quiet and private room or in designated areas outside (Cremin 2001). Tyrrell (1995) describes how rotors can be drawn up by/for pupils to schedule mediation duties and a log of agreements made during peer mediation kept for future reference. Peer mediation is a voluntary process (Isenhardt and Spangle 2000), therefore services have a greater chance of being well used if they are high profile (Stacey et al 1997, Tyrrell and Farrell 1995). Strategies to raise the profile of peer mediation services include advertising the services and peer mediators wearing baseball caps or braids to make themselves more visible (Sellman 2002).

#### *2.5.4 Research about peer mediation*

Little research has been done in this country about the implementation of peer mediation services. Hence, little is known about the prevalence of such services and their effectiveness. Johnson and Johnson (1996) have shown that pupils trained as peer mediators in the United States learn and retain skills of negotiation and mediation. Furthermore, the successful implementation of peer mediation services results in reductions in inter-pupil conflicts referred to teachers for arbitration. Johnson and Johnson (1994) reviewed findings about peer mediation in the United States to find that 85-95 per cent of conflicts mediated by peers resulted in lasting and stable agreements. However, Johnson and Johnson (1994, 1996) critique peer mediation’s research base. This is often thin, giving little detail about the training process and failing to show whether such training results in actual changes in pupil’s conflict resolution strategies. In their own studies, Johnson and Johnson (1994) found that pupils used destructive strategies that frequently escalated conflicts (e.g. insulting disputants, encouraging others

to fight) and then sought the help of teachers before peer mediation training. After training adult involvement significantly dropped and pupils were more likely to use constructive strategies when in conflict, such as negotiation skills.

Tyrrell (1995) conducted one of the first studies of peer mediation in the United Kingdom. This was a piece of action research undertaken in conjunction with teachers about what would be required of prospective schools to launch peer mediation services in Northern Ireland. This research identified that mediation for children is not the same as for adults. Children needed additional training in such sophisticated skills as staying neutral in disputes, repeating back rather than reframing what was heard and the importance of ensuring confidentiality. Although teachers were often amazed by the skills trained mediators demonstrated, pupils found scripts very useful in the initial stages of running the service. Disputants were also more eager than adults to make friends quicker but less willing to type up formal agreements.

A study of peer mediation projects in Scotland (Griffith 1996) and Teeside (Knight and Sked 1998) found no systematic approach to the implementation of such services. Attempts to devise and implement such programmes have derived from peace activists rather than educationalists and psychologists (Johnson and Johnson 1996). Hence, such programmes often lack theoretical connections and clearly peer mediation would benefit from greater research in this regard. Research by Silcock and Stacey (1996) shows that for peer mediation services to be successful a co-operative school culture already needs to exist. Tyrrell (1995) argues that peer mediation challenges hierarchical relationships at school because it gives greater authority to pupils. Some teachers in Griffith's (1996) and Knight and Sked's (1998) studies and lunchtime supervisors in Tyrrell's (1995) study found it difficult to hand over some of this authority to pupils.

A number of these themes are reiterated in PhD research by Hilary Stacey (disseminated in Silcock and Stacey 1995, Stacey 1996, Stacey et al 1997). She evaluated the implementation of peer mediation services at three primary schools. This used a quasi-

experiment design, involving pupil questionnaires and teacher interviews to measure changes in levels of bullying, pupils' self-esteem and loci of control after peer mediation training was delivered. A peer mediation scheme was launched at one of the three schools investigated. At this school, peer mediation was credited with reducing the frequency of pupils reporting being a victim of bullying and bullying others, and an improvement in pupils' self-esteem on self-completed questionnaires. Peer mediation training was enabled by a whole-school approach and complementary behaviour policies. Of crucial importance to the success of this service was the observation that the headteacher had realistically assessed the starting point, likely support and training needs of the pupils and teachers. This was in contrast to the other two schools, where peer mediation services were not implemented. At these schools, the headteacher overestimated the skills of their staff and the degree to which they were prepared to support the service. The behaviour management policies were and remained centred around notions of teacher control and playground surveillance.

In cases where peer mediation is well supported by the staff of the school (e.g. Maxwell 1989, Rogers 1996, Stacey 1996) the services can be very successful. They may also result in increased self-esteem and an internal shift in loci of control for those trained as peer mediators. If this can be supported with robust evidence, peer mediation could be of great benefit to other aspects of human development in addition to skills in conflict resolution. However, given a number of researchers' (e.g. Griffith 1996, Knight and Sked's 1998, Tyrrell 1995) observations that schools experience great difficulty in implementing and sustaining peer mediation services because of issues of power and control, the present research base would benefit from greater elucidation of the processes that enable and constrain their implementation.

## **2.6 Summary and critical commentary**

The aims of conducting a literature review include preparing the writer with sufficient conceptual understanding of the topic under study and reflecting upon any theoretical and empirical gaps within the existing knowledge base (Clough and Nutbrown 2002, Fink 1998, Hart 1998). This understanding, accompanied by further reflection on methodologies in the next chapter, assist the writer in refining the research question accordingly, identifying appropriate tools for data collection and drawing conclusions in an informed manner. The merits and limitation of concepts and tools selected to illuminate this study are critically reviewed at appropriate points throughout the thesis. In light of the literature reviewed within this chapter, what does the writer know about the research topic? Furthermore, in what ways does this knowledge base prepare the writer with an understanding of issues that may inform the selection of a theoretical approach to guide the research, and what can the writer hope to add to this knowledge base?

Several lessons can be drawn from the review of literature, which have implications for the manner in which research will proceed. These concern the ontological nature of conflict and the knowledge base regarding the implementation of interventions such as peer mediation in schools. Part I highlighted that although conflict is an inevitable phenomenon with distinct phases, its nature and outcomes are not determined (Isenhardt and Spangle 2000). Different people use different strategies to pursue different goals (Easterbrook et al 1992) and these strategies can be educated (Goleman 1996). Conflict is also a concept applied at a number of levels of analysis: psychological operations, individual actions and group activity (e.g. Dahrendorf 1959). The observation that conflict has both a conceptual and behavioural nature (Wright 1951) is particularly important. This is because research in the social sciences frequently treats psychological phenomena as if they can be observed by behavioural acts alone (Ratner 1997). Hence, approaches involving applied behaviour analysis (e.g. Baer et al 1968, Merrett and Wheldall 1978, Roderick et al 1997) may be able to identify whether peer mediation

results in an increase or decrease in observable acts but will offer little analysis of how and why, and whether attitudes to conflict have changed or new strategies have been learned (Johnson and Johnson 1994). These issues are taken into a discussion of ways of answering the research question in the next chapter.

Together, these points raise issues of structure and agency (Hay 1995). To understand conflict resolution in schools, and the impact of interventions such as peer mediation upon this phenomenon, it will be necessary to identify and develop a theoretical approach that conceptualises the relationship between organisations (schools and training agencies) and individuals (pupils and adults). Particularly, how social and cultural practices in schools may or may not be transformed to create, but not determine, possibilities for individuals to think and act in new ways.

Parts II and III of the literature review highlighted that a number of interventions in schools can be effective in teaching children conflict resolution skills. However, Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) argue that some of these interventions focus their attention on the behaviour of individuals rather than social and cultural practices. Yet, such factors are crucial ingredients in whether initiatives are successful or not (Smith and Thompson 1994). For example, Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) argue that successful anti-violence initiatives in schools,

- focus on the cultural level as well as the individual,
- acknowledge the relationship between conflict resolution skills and their own organisation, policies and pedagogy; and
- are prepared to give pupils some autonomy.

Research by Griffith (1996), Stacey et al (1997) and Tyrrell (1995) has highlighted that peer mediation fails to become established in the absence of the above points. Yet, the processes via which such interventions fail are little understood. Visser et al (2000) argue this is because interventions and their accompanying research base are short in duration and isolated from a cultural analysis.

The evidence base for much of the work within the field of EBD relies upon short term outcomes and interventions which become fashionable for a short time, and fade away as the next ‘guru’ comes along. There is little evidence which points to long term outcomes for particular interventions which have been in place for extended periods of time.

(Visser et al 2000, p. 168)

The literature reviewed in this chapter showed that schools are frequently the subject of interventions to reduce, eliminate or resolve conflicts in school. Often, these are quick fix solutions aimed at specific short-term problems with little attention to educational consequences and long-term whole-school cultural transformation. Research about the implementation of peer mediation services in schools does not identify in any great detail a) how schools are or are not transformed, b) by whom, and c) what is the long-term effect on both organisational and interactional levels of analysis. Also, little detail is known about why some services fail or are only short term. In these regards, the thesis has an opportunity to make a significant contribution to knowledge.

Such gaps in theory inform a discussion of ways of answering and developing the research question in the next chapter. To provide a range of theoretical approaches capable of fulfilling these requirements, a literature review of approaches within the social sciences is included in the next chapter. This is a sizeable but justifiable addition to the continuing review of literature. This endeavour will equip the writer with the theoretical concepts and methodology to conduct a rigorous analysis of such cultural processes.



## **CHAPTER 3: THE SELECTION OF A THEORETICAL APPROACH**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Methodology is something that should permeate every aspect of a thesis and should not be contained to a single chapter on data collection techniques (Clough and Nutbrown 2002). In fact, the methods of data collection adopted by a researcher reveal a great deal about his/her view of the world (Cohen and Manion 1994). The purpose of this chapter is to explore contrasting ways of answering the research question and how these different approaches are underpinned by radically different views of human nature, knowledge and means of conducting research.

The chapter begins by highlighting that all research methods have inherited a scientific legacy, with assumptions about how to search for truth. However, these methods vary in their ontological view of human behaviour and epistemological positions regarding its study. In considering the merits and limitations of contrasting approaches, the shortcomings of a positivistic approach to investigating the research topic are presented and an argument made for a cultural analysis (Cole 1996, Ratner 1997). In light of this critique, the writer argues the need for a theoretical approach that conceptualises social and individual transformation as interrelated processes. The identification of such a theory represents a key methodological milestone in the thesis (Clough and Nutbrown 2002). This is because the theoretical approach selected will provide the concepts and tools, derived from a particular view of the world, to guide the study. Given the importance of this task, the selection of a theoretical approach from a number of alternatives within the social sciences warrants rigorous review. From these alternatives, a cultural psychological approach, which includes CHAT (Engestrom 1998a), is selected and its particular merits and limitations are discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

### 3.2 Science, world-view and methodology

In this section, the relationship between research as a scientific enquiry, the world-view of different approaches within science and their impact on methodological choices is outlined. Cohen and Manion (1994), Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), Lazar (1998), Overton (1975, 1984), Overton and Reese (1973, 1981), Robson (1993) and Seale (1998a) give an account of the nature of scientific enquiry in their introductions to social research. In these texts, science is defined as any empirical enquiry that seeks to establish or expand understanding of phenomena in the world. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) explain that the sciences are united by methodological assumptions rather than by their subject matter. What sets scientific enquiry apart from other means of acquiring knowledge, such as theology and metaphysics, are these assumptions, which can be described as:

- Nature is orderly.
- Nature can be known.
- Natural phenomenon have natural causes.
- Nothing is self-evident.
- Knowledge is derived from experience through the senses.
- Knowledge is tentative but superior to ignorance.

According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), the methodology of the scientific approach provides rules, which govern communication, logical reasoning and the sharing of knowledge. These rule systems allow human beings to understand, explain and predict themselves and their environment in ways that other species and information producing methods cannot. Scientific knowledge is validated by both reason and evidence acquired by the senses. This requires the need for reliable means of observing phenomena in the real world and theoretical expertise in the field of research to explain these observations.

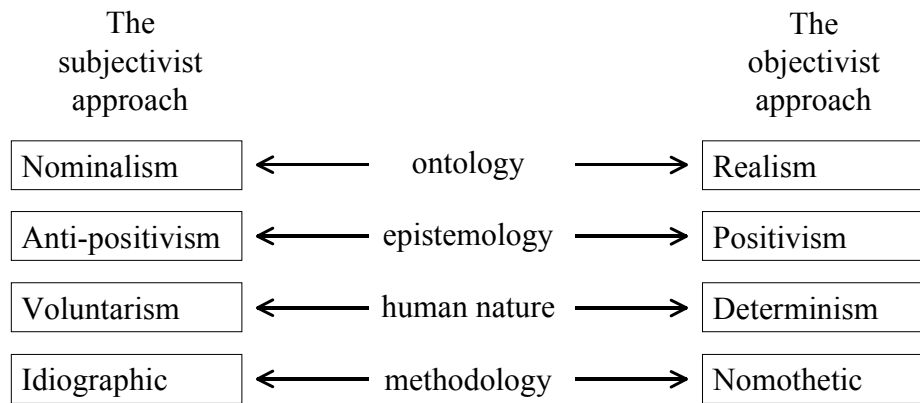
Whereas it cannot be disputed that research needs to be reliable, Robson (1993), Lazar (1998) and Walford (1991) contest the objectivity of science, arguing it cannot be guaranteed. Ultimately, there is no fully proven scientific knowledge; no automatic method and the processes of science are inevitably muddled with people's opinions and prejudices (Lazar 1998). This is central to a 'hermeneutic' view, which regards perception as actively constructed. The implication is that what human beings perceive depends upon what they look at and how they interpret what they see.

Scientific theory is thus characterised by contrasting approaches. One extreme emphasises objectivity whilst the other emphasises subjectivity. Cohen and Manion (1994) describe how these two extreme approaches to science set certain parameters for the conception of social reality and subsequent methodological choices. The social scientist commonly favours an intermediate approach, as stated by Burrell and Morgan (1979):

Thus, we can identify perspectives in social science which entail a view of human beings responding in a mechanistic or even deterministic fashion to the situations encountered in their external world. This view tends to be one in which human beings and their experiences are regarded as products of the environment; one in which humans are conditioned by their external circumstances. This extreme perspective can be contrasted with one which attributes to human beings a much more creative role: with a perspective where "free will" occupies the centre of the stage; where man is regarded as the creator of his environment, the controller as opposed to the controlled, the master rather than the marionette. In these two extreme views of the relationship between human beings and their environments, we are identifying a great philosophical debate between the advocates of *determinism* on the one hand and *voluntarism* on the other. Whilst there are social theories which adhere to each of these extremes, the assumptions of many social scientists are pitched somewhere in the range between.

(Burrell and Morgan 1979, p. 7, italics in original)

Adopting either a objectivist or subjectivist position is associated with contrasting ontologies, epistemologies, conceptions of human nature and methodologies, as depicted in figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1: A scheme for analysing assumptions about the nature of social science**  
(Cohen and Manion 1994, p. 9)

Figure 3.1 shows that research methods relate to superordinate views of the world and theories of knowledge. Cohen and Manion (1994) and Lazar (1998) suggest researchers adopting an objectivist approach to social science are realists. Realism posits that the world exists and is knowable as it really is; the world is viewed as hard, real, external and determining. Consequently, a nomothetic methodology is chosen to measure aspects of the world as it is, which include a range of traditional numerate/scientific techniques such as experiments or surveys (Robson 1993). Robson (1993) states that the epistemology of the objectivist approach is characterised by the positivistic emphasis on data gathered by the senses. Such an approach involves sequential steps of hypothesis deduction, its expression in operational terms, its testing, examination and if necessary modification of the original theory before its generalisation.

Conversely, Cohen and Manion (1994) and Lazar (1998) suggest that those who reject a positivistic approach in favour of a subjectivist approach subscribe to an idealist conception of social reality. Idealists acknowledge that the world exists but different

people construe it in different ways, with forms of communication ‘representing’ an interpretation of the world rather than actually measuring it. Meaning is therefore constructed and knowledge is referential or nominal. Human beings are viewed as conscious/free agents (voluntarism) in a world, which is malleable to their actions. The epistemology of the approach is more interpretative and emerging techniques such as accounts, participant observation and case studies are chosen (Robson 1993). As a result, this approach emphasises concepts that arise from the enquiry itself, during or after data collection, rather than before (e.g. Charmaz 1995).

Both approaches are characterised by contrasting views of causality. This distinction is an important consideration because any investigation interested in relating outcomes (approaches to conflict resolution) to interventions (peer mediation) is concerned with causality. To decide whether one thing causes another, a researcher might consider whether A precedes B (temporal causality), whether A is always present with B (constant conjunction) or whether a relationship links A and B, such as more A is associated with more B (contiguity of influence) (Miles and Huberman 1994). Reflecting upon the epistemologies of objective and subjective approaches to research in greater detail may help the writer proceed in their investigation with a greater awareness of the ontological assumptions and methodological implications of both for examining the impact of peer mediation services upon interpersonal conflict resolution in schools.

The epistemological tenet of an objective approach is positivism. This term is derived from the philosopher Comte, who argued that the highest order of knowledge was the description of sensory phenomena (Cohen and Manion 1994). Positivists in the social sciences accept the principles of natural science for understanding and explaining human behaviour. These are an emphasis on the observation of social reality and the search for ‘law-like’ relations in these observations (Giddens 1975). Social science is thus concerned with the observation, analysis and explanation of causal relations.

One such approach is Applied Behaviour Analysis (Baer et al 1968, Merrett and Wheldall 1978), which concentrates on the impact of an intervention upon overt behaviour, often

with the aid of statistical techniques. Such an approach to the topic of this research poses a question along the lines: ‘does peer mediation reduce conflict?’ In preparing an answer, the approach might express conflict as behavioural acts of violence or aggression, count such acts on the playground before, during and after an intervention and evaluate the intervention in relation to whether these acts have been significantly increased or decreased. In reality, the research question posed is actually along the lines, ‘does peer mediation reduce levels of school violence or bullying?’

Ratner (1997) argues such an approach is limited. Ratner (1997) exposes these weaknesses by analysing the shortcomings of the principles of positivism; expressed as atomism, quantification and operationalism. Atomism refers to the belief that psychological phenomenon (e.g. aggression) can be reduced and expressed as separate and independent variables. Quantification refers to the process whereby these variables are expressed in numbers to represent their strength or degree, which are then correlated to ascertain their significance. Operationalism defines psychological phenomenon as simple overt behaviours (e.g. aggression=punching). These weaknesses are linked to erroneous ontological assumptions about the nature of psychological phenomenon and epistemological assumptions regarding their scientific study.

Relating Ratner’s (1997) criticisms to Applied Behaviour Analysis illustrates the problems of this approach for examining the impact of peer mediation on conflict resolution in schools. First, as the literature review from the previous chapter highlighted, conflict is both a conceptual and behavioural phenomenon. Positivism separates psychological phenomenon into separate and individual variables (e.g. conflict and cooperation) that can be observed behaviourally. In doing so the approach asserts that such phenomena are distinct. Yet, theorists such as Deutsch (1969, 1973) have shown that such concepts as conflict and cooperation are not discrete. For example, conflict can be a component of a co-operative group’s decision-making processes (Easterbrook et al 1992). Cole (1996) argues that all behaviour has a particular cultural meaning and diverse forms of expression, which are obfuscated when reduced to variables and expressed in operational terms. Observing behavioural acts such as violence and aggression on the

playground assumes that these acts are unambiguous evidence of a corresponding psychological property (conflict), which is otherwise neglected from the analysis. However, one cannot assume that non-aggressive acts are not evidence of conflict and that all aggressive behaviour is evidence of conflict. For example, conflict between girls is frequently expressed through social exclusion (Smith and Sharp 1994) and many boys play games involving aggression (e.g. arm wrestling).

Another problem with this method is its lack of description about the intervention. Johnson and Johnson (1994) have criticised the evidence base underpinning research about peer mediation in the United States, observing that peer mediation training is often seen as universal in its content and process. Yet, Johnson and Johnson (1994) have observed peer mediation training varying from lessons on Gandhi to specific training in negotiation skills. Statistical analysis of overt behaviours before and after such training elucidate no detail about the cultural nature of the training and its impact on outcomes. Such approaches also yield little information regarding whether the conflict resolution strategies used after intervention have any relation to those taught during training.

Had a statistical evaluation been solely adopted for the analysis of data presented in chapter seven of this study, the intervention would have been declared a failure because it had no impact on overt behaviours recorded by self-report questionnaires. Yet, pupils and teachers interviewed after the intervention reported how their strategies for dealing with conflict had changed because of the training. There are a number of possible explanations for this incongruence. The data collection tools used may have measured a phenomenon unaffected by the intervention, or vice versa and/or the tools used unreliably. This is why Barnes (1982) and Holly and Hopkins (1988) draw attention to the need to account for 'transactions' as well as antecedents and outcomes in evaluating curriculum and school development in order that outcomes can be related to the intervention directly. However, they refer to 'observable' transactions of the training process, which leaves the approach open to some of the same criticisms as positivism.

Positivism frequently makes use of large random samples, including controls, to claim causality between interventions and outcomes based on statistical significance between two or more variables (e.g. Farrington 2002, Medical Research Council 2000). The challenge to educational research posed by such an approach is that large samples are difficult to achieve, controls are almost impossible and the cultural complexity of human behaviour means that data will be frequently muddled with other 'variables' that are difficult to eliminate (Johnson and Johnson 1994, Robson 1993). Johnson and Johnson (1994) state that one of the problems about conducting research regarding peer mediation is the lack of a direct relationship between the independent variable (the training) and dependent variables (outcomes measures such as 'constructive' responses to conflict). For example training in negotiation and mediation involve training in communicational skills, which do not translate directly into less violence between pupils. Neither does having a conflict mediated necessarily improve one's ability to resolve conflict constructively in the future.

In contrast to an objective approach to research, the epistemological tenet of a subjective approach is anti-positivism (Cohen and Manion 1994). Anti-positivist researchers evoke a picture of social life as a web of interconnections with parts that are so intricately linked and proximate in time and space that it is difficult to distinguish causal relationships. Instead, such researchers use qualitative methods in describing and explaining the idiosyncratic nature of social reality. Qualitative methods are often criticised as being weak in identifying causal relationships because of their lack of reliance on statistics. However, Miles and Huberman (1994) and Ratner (1997) argue that such methods can be more powerful in describing and explaining at close hand the temporal order of events and the networks of complex connections.

Whereas a positivist approach to examining the implementation of peer mediation services in schools may be useful in generating statistical data upon which to analyse the impact of the intervention on 'variables' used to measure conflict, this approach will yield little information regarding the cultural processes involved in the intervention's success. In the previous chapter it was argued that interventions, such as peer mediation,



are more likely to be successful when they are a component of a whole school approach and are accompanied by some transformation of school organisation (Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997, Smith and Sharp 1994, Stacey et al 1997). Chapter two also contained the argument that little is known about why interventions fail or are only short term or how schools are transformed when they are successful (Visser et al 2000). To understand these processes, a methodology is needed that incorporates the analysis of process. Therefore, an alternative way of approaching this research is to ask; what are the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services for interpersonal conflict resolution in schools?

Any study of causality evokes questions about structure and agency (Hay 1995, May 1996). For example, Hay (1995, p. 35) contrasts two opposing stances: ‘Are actors unwitting products of their context with minimal control on outcomes or are actors knowledgeable and intentional beings with control over their settings?’ This question is of crucial importance to this study as interventions in different schools result in different outcomes. A study of processes allows the writer to engage with these issues (Cole 1996, Ratner 1997). This is because behaviour is analysed in context over extended periods of time (Bronfenbrenner 1979), allowing explanation of how context and/or behaviour might be transformed by intervention.

However, there are many theoretical approaches within the social sciences that attempt to resolve issues of structure and agency. The selection and development of CHAT from a review of these approaches represents an important methodological advance in the thesis. Clough and Nutbrown (2002) argue that the selection of a theoretical approach is a critical aspect of ongoing methodology, which will have implications for the further development of research questions, research design and ultimately the meaning made of data collected. Therefore, the selection of a theoretical approach warrants a rigorous review. This is because the theoretical approach will have a significant bearing upon how interventions regarding conflict resolution in schools are viewed and researched, and will provide the concepts for explaining any observations.

To understand the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services for interpersonal conflict resolution in schools, it is necessary to identify an approach that theorises structure at a number of levels of analysis and the relationships between them. For this study, these are between the individual and the institution and between the institution and the training agency (WMQPEP). According to Dahrendorf (1959), institutions such as schools represent a medium between both micro and macro levels of analysis. Bernstein (2000) states that the attempt of some social theories to integrate the micro and macro (interactional, institutional and macro-institutional levels of analysis) requires the development of a new language with consistency across these levels. This demands developing a theoretical approach able to translate concepts used at one level of analysis to another.

A lot of educational research has been conducted as if schools are uniform in their organisation and effect on human development (Daniels 1993). In the selection of a theoretical approach it will be necessary to also consider the formative relationships between institutional and interactional levels of analysis, subsumed by the concept of agency. Interventions in schools are unlikely to result in automatic and uncontested outcomes for individuals; therefore it is necessary to incorporate a dialectical notion of agency into the theoretical approach. A dialectical view of agency posits human beings as potentially shaped by structures but they also have the potential to shape structure themselves.

A number of potential approaches within social science are reviewed in the remainder of this chapter. As each is reviewed, their utility for theorising across levels of analysis and their positions regarding agency are critiqued. This review is at a theoretical level, the merits and limitations of these approaches for investigating the implementation of peer mediation services in schools is the subject of critical commentary at the end of this chapter.

### **3.3 Theorising the relationship between interactional and institutional levels of analysis**

The purpose of the remainder of this chapter is to review a number of alternative approaches within social science, which have the potential to theorise the relationship between interactional and institutional levels of analysis. The review of these theories is presented to the reader in two sub-sections. The first shows how interactional and institutional levels of analysis can be integrated through attention to a) language and b) interconnected levels of context. The second section reviews how theories within social science account for agency.

Structuring this review is problematic as it attempts to juxtapose a number of complex ideas. Social structure and agency are interrelated terms in a number of social theories (Hay 1995). Thus in writing this review, a point of entry has to be identified. To deal with this problem, two different formats come to mind. The first is a critique of a selection of social theories one by one. This was attempted in a previous draft and was cumbersome to read. The second and chosen approach is to deal with the need to theorise the relationship between levels of analysis and the need to theorise agency separately. The disadvantage of this approach is whichever term is discussed first requires reference to the other. No easy way of resolving this problem occurred to the writer, other than making the reader aware of it.

Many of the social theories reviewed have been built upon the theoretical inheritance of social theory from classical traditions and thinkers such as Marx, Durkheim and Weber. Reviews of these theories can be found in Filmer, Jenks, Seale, and Walsh (1998), Lazar (1998) and May (1996). Searching the citations of these sources was a useful strategy in identifying families of theories to investigate further. From a range of alternatives, cultural-psychological approaches (an umbrella term for theories, which include sociocultural theory and CHAT) are selected as the approach to theorise the relationship between interactional and institutional levels of analysis. A more detailed discussion of

the merits and limitations of this choice and the selection of a specific approach are reserved for chapter four.

### *3.3.1 The integration of interactional and institutional levels of analysis through attention to language*

Social theory (May 1996) contains a number of approaches, which attempt to integrate interactional and institutional levels of analysis through detailed attention to language, its production at the macro level and its reproduction at the micro level. This section discusses three such approaches, symbolic interactionism (e.g. Mead 1934), communicative action (e.g. Habermas 1981) and the analysis of discourse (e.g. Foucault 1995). The problem with concentrating analysis upon the content of language (be it symbols, communication or discourse) is that context and its interconnections are inadequately described (Star 1996) and agency is either downplayed or over elevated (May 1996).

Symbolic interactionism offers a unit of analysis, which condenses the micro and macro into a ‘social self’. The roots of symbolic interactionism are derived from Mead (1934, see also Goff 1980, Valsiner and van der Veer 1988), who divided the social self between an ‘I’ (conversational character of inner experience) and ‘me’ (others attitudes assumed through conversational interchange). Thus, the integration of levels of analysis is achieved by positioning the individual and group in developmental symbiosis, integrated by the transmission of language. One of the greatest achievements of this and similar theories are their contribution to the ending of the division between mind and body, inherited from Descartes (Damasio 1996, 2000). Attention to language development as an internal representation of external reality has highlighted an irreducible tension in the relationship between the two. Thus the macro world of language production and the micro world of cognition are integrated.

The use of language to integrate the micro and macro has been further developed by communicative action, based on the work of Habermas (Outhwaite 1996). This approach suggests there is inter-dependence between the coordinated activities of individuals and society, made possible by communication. Habermas (1981) states,

...social systems can form new structures by utilizing the learning capacities of their members in order to cope with problems that threaten system maintenance. In this respect the evolutionary learning process of societies is dependent on the competence of their individual members. These in turn acquire their competence, not as isolated monads, but by growing into the symbolic structure of their social world.

(Habermas 1981, p. 269)

Where symbolic interactionism emphasises the self as a product of sociality, communicative action presents society as shaped by the aggregation of individual problem solving and is dependent on these processes for its reproduction and evolution. These processes are similarly integrated through communication.

Outhwaite (1996) describes how communicative action utilises Popper's distinction between three worlds of objects; these are physical, mental and cultural objects. These are modified by Habermas into practices/customs, ideas and the 'lifeworld'. The macro level of society, or the 'lifeworld', is maintained by the coordinated activities of its members (communicative action) on the micro level. However, the coordination of individuals is theorised without sufficient attention to the argument that the 'lifeworld' of collective activity requires motives, which are greater than the sum of actions (Leontiev 1981).

In concentrating analysis upon language and symbols as the thread between the micro and macro, the context in which communication takes place is often inadequately described (Star 1996). Therefore, both symbolic interactionism and communicative action are limited in terms of their conceptualisation of power. Communication is privileged to the point that transformation becomes an act of rhetoric. Little attention is focused on who actually produces language. For example, Bruner (1986, p. 148) states,

‘the language, after all, is being reshaped by massive corporations, by police states, by those who would create an efficient European market or an invincible America living under a shield of lasers’.

A third approach which utilises language as a means of integrating the micro and the macro, yet attempts to engage with issues of power is the analysis of discourse (e.g. Foucault 1995). Discourse analysis is characterised by attention to how knowledge production at the macro level and its transmission as discourse (language specific to context) regulates context at the micro level. Foucault (1995) concerns himself with the relationship between reality and language which describes reality. Particular attention is paid to the development of authoritative language, used to regulate specific disciplines, e.g. education, law and medicine. Analysis is then concerned with how this knowledge is produced to regulate social order (Harris, Eden and Blair 2000). According to May (1996), this analysis requires three considerations: the contribution of science to this process, practices of division (e.g. the sick and the healthy, mad and sane) and the means by which people turn themselves into subjects (individualisation). Research focuses upon how the body, space and time at the micro level are routinely supervised and controlled by disciplinary forces at the macro level, best exemplified in enclosed geographical spaces such as schools and prisons.

Each of these approaches presents novel ways of integrating the micro and the macro. However, May (1996) indicates these approaches re-emphasise the dichotomy between subject and object by exaggerating the agency of one over the other. Symbolic interactionism can be interpreted as over emphasising social formation, which downplays individual agency. This was not the intention of the theory, which is not meant to assume either total freedom of the individual nor total constraint at the macro level. Goff (1980) describes Mead’s intended anti-reductionism, where for example a compound is always qualitatively different to the sum of its parts. Conscious behaviour cannot therefore be fully comprehended by analytical reduction (van der Veer and Valsiner 1991). The ‘I’ concept was introduced into the theory of symbolic interactionism to account for creativity and intention in human processes. Goff (1980) states the use of the term ‘I’ is

unfortunate as it has attracted criticism for being a fictitious element, which without, Mead's account fails because 'I' is determined by prior social process. Mead (1934), however, did not see the mind as a blank slate onto which a copy of reality was chalked, rather he engaged with the idea that communication allows human beings to shape aspects of their reality.

In contrast to the criticisms of symbolic interactionism, May (1996) describes how Habermas possibly over-emphasises the agency of the individual. Society is seen as the coordination of individual acts and issues of power between groups within society are under-theorised. Agency is further problematic in the analysis of discourse. An aspect of this approach and a criticism, outlined by Giddens (1977) is that power is not located within individuals or systems but in discourses. Power emerges from 'history without a subject' (Giddens 1977, p.232), it does not have one source (it is both vertical and horizontal) and is variable with context. The subject (and any conscious source of power) is therefore lost. Piaget (1971) referred to this as structuration without structures. There are no grounds for how power can be resisted despite it being endemic. Consequently, Foucault's (1995) work can also be interpreted as downplaying individual agency.

These theories make useful propositions regarding the integration of micro and macro levels of analysis, including that between mind and world. Language, of some form, is presented as the thread or transmitter between layers of context. However, a social theory is needed which describes context, its dynamics and interconnections with greater adequacy, yet does not distort a dialectical view of agency.

### *3.3.2 The integration of interactional and institutional levels of analysis through interconnected levels of context*

A number of other theories attempt to integrate the micro and macro by attending to how context is structured and its relationship to other contexts. Many of these social theories

engage with how rules/power either emerge or are produced to regulate context. For example, ethnomethodology (Filmer et al 1998, May 1996) is the study of behaviour framed by specific social situations. However, it only engages with the relationship between the macro level of an immediate context (the social situation studied) and the micro level of individual context related behaviour. Thus, attention to the historical and cultural development of context and its relationship to other levels of context are neglected.

In this approach, the researcher does not impose rationality on situations but allows context to account for them. Ethnomethodology seeks only to describe an order in everyday life rather than resorting to an '*a priori*' analytical framework. Words in such situations are tools, which allow for intersubjectivity between members of the immediate context and are purely functional (Filmer et al 1998). Similarly, actions are context-related routines. Consequently, there is attention to the 'rules' that consciously or unconsciously produce and reproduce social actions and structures. The approach can then be criticised for its subdued account of the subject (May 1996). The study of social phenomena in this way allows researchers an observatory role only; intervention is viewed as not appropriate. As this study is concerned with acting upon social situations, ethnomethodology is neither an appropriate research strategy nor offers a satisfactory theory of context.

An attempt more relevant to the needs of this study, which integrates micro and the macro levels of analysis is the work of Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1991, Bourdieu and Passeron 2000) and his concepts of habitus, capital and field. The concept of 'capital' is used to link the individual to 'fields' of context. These concepts are well outlined by (Connolly 1998) and summarised here.

**Habitus:** Although individuals have agency, their thoughts and actions are constrained to a significant extent by their habitus, which is an individual's internalised approaches to the social world. These are the cumulation of lived experiences, which predispose certain ways of thinking, phrased as 'history-made-nature' by Cole (1996, p. 138). As an



example, living as a young child with domestic violence may normalise violence as ‘the way’ of resolving conflict. This is not meant to be deterministic but acknowledges that individuals do not have an endless repertoire of strategies to draw upon.

**Capital:** Conflicts over capital constitute the main dynamic through which social stratification and change are understood. There are four types of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic. Acquisition of one or more types of capital enables individuals to gain power and status. Through an individual’s ongoing acquisition of capital their habitus and access to future capital is further developed. Bourdieu and Passeron (2000) suggest there is a strong relationship between the possession of ‘cultural capital’ and success in the education system. It is claimed societal relations are reproduced through education and the transmission of cultural capital. Capital can also be acquired and lost through social networks as well as inherited (Gamarnikow and Green 1999, Hodkinson and Bloomer 2001).

**Field:** Capital, however, possesses different value(s) in different fields. For example, feminine behaviours may be valued amongst girls but not boys (Epstein et al 1998). A field is defined as the arena where certain forms of capital are present and their surrounding relations. Fields are multiple, interconnected and vary in scale, they contextualise action and competition for capital. Social and power relations are frequently characterised in fields via temporal and spatial organisation. Multiple fields mean individuals will have multiple ‘habitudes’, represented by different frames for being in different contexts, therefore action should always be seen in its wider social context.

The concepts of habitus, capital and field present an account of context that integrates the micro and the macro. The thread, which does this, is the concept of capital. Analysis of power is included by the different value capital has in different fields. The valuation given to capital occurs in fields, which tend to naturalise their own arbitrariness. Although power is described to some extent, individual human agency is once again

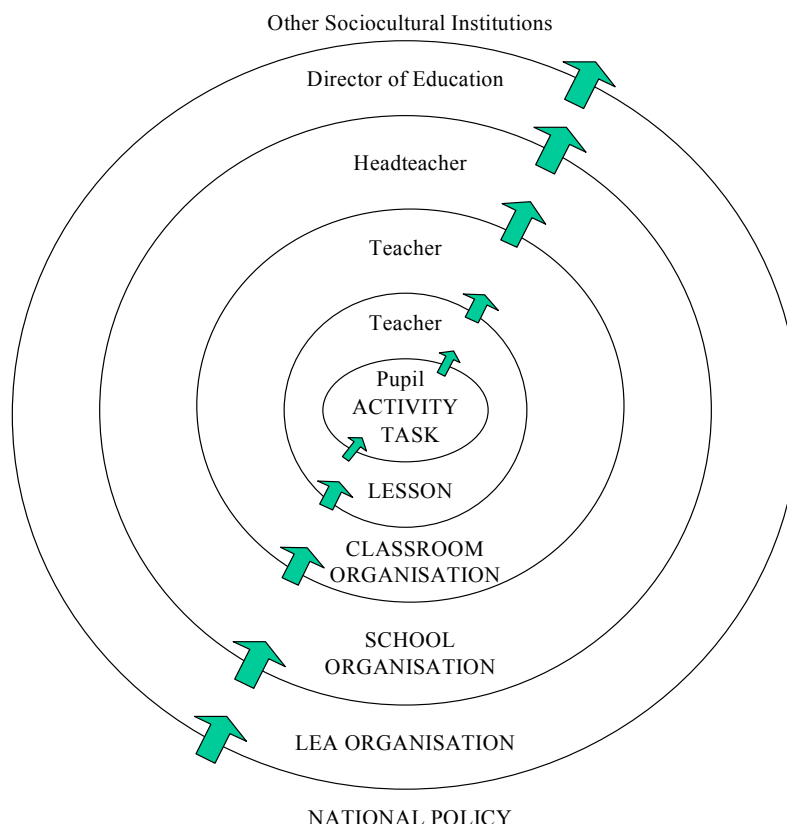
downplayed, as the accounts of conflict suggested by these concepts are often unknown to individual agents.

The limitations of Bourdieu's concepts for this thesis, particularly habitus and field, include their lack of theorisation and description. For example, consider Bernstein's (2000) criticism of Bourdieu's concept of habitus.

...if we take a popular concept, *habitus*, whilst it may solve certain epistemological problems of agency and structure, it is only known or recognised by its apparent outcomes. Habitus is described in terms of what it gives rise to, and brings, or does not bring about... But it is not described with reference to the particular ordering principles or strategies, which give rise to the formation of a particular habitus. The formation of the internal structure of the particular habitus, the mode of its specific acquisition, which gives it its specificity, is not described. How it comes to be is not part of the description, only what it does. There is no description of its specific formation... Habitus is known by its output not its input.

(Bernstein 2000, p. 133, italics in original)

Without description of the differences between contexts, it is implied that each person's habitus is structured consistently (Bernstein 2000). Whilst the interconnectedness of context is theorised by Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1991, Bourdieu and Passeron 2000), the description and constitution of different contexts is not. To understand the processes and outcomes of interventions in schools an approach that theorises the structure of contexts is required. Such an approach is employed by cultural-psychological theories, which suggest individuals act and react to interconnected levels of context that 'weave' together. Figure 3.2 illustrates this approach in relation to an educational example.



**Figure 3.2: Culture as the weaving together of layers of context (based on Cole 1996, p. 133)**

The unit in the middle may be referred to as the task or activity engaged in by individuals. Cole (1996) further discusses this model to emphasise that boundaries between contexts are not clear-cut. He distinguishes between notions of context defined as that which ‘surrounds’ and notions of context defined as that which ‘weaves’ together. In doing so, he draws on the legacy of Bronfenbrenner and his classic text (Bronfenbrenner 1979) on the ecology of human development, which portrayed layers of context in concentric circles. This image of progressive wrapping of the individual is re-focused by Cole (1996) onto the relationship between context and behaviour, characterised by the goals and tools used in and across different settings. Whereas these layers of context shape behaviour, Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ‘onion rings’ may also be reshaped, transformed, deleted and mutually inter-penetrated as represented by the use of arrows in figure 3.2. This accounts for a notion of context that weaves together where agency is neither totally free nor constrained.

Tudge (1997) has also suggested that understanding of human development requires analysis at a number of interconnected levels:

Development is a function of factors that relate to the immediate activity in which one or more people are involved (the microgenetic level of analysis), age and developmental characteristics of the studied person or people as they are developing over the life span (the ontogenetic level), the culture wide symbols, values and beliefs, technologies, and institutions (factors relating to the cultural-historical level of analysis), as well as the development of the species (the phylogenetic level). There is hierarchical organization, but also interconnections at each and every level. Because of the interconnections, understanding development requires analysis that captures all levels, although the phylogenetic level, being virtually unchanging for all except those studying development over archaeological time, is rarely considered. This means, in effect, studying aspects of developing individuals, relations between those individuals and their immediately surrounding world (both people and objectives), and the broader cultural-historical context. Analysis at only one level is insufficient to make sense of development.

Tudge (1997, pp. 120-121, brackets in original)

By emphasising the interconnections between layers of context, attention is focused on understanding how ‘activity’ is shaped and framed by broader layers of context and the dynamics between them. Cultural-psychological approaches present an approach that integrates levels of analysis and begins to theorise how these levels of context shape and are shaped by individuals. In the next chapter, the third-generation of CHAT will be presented as advantageous to theorising levels of interconnected context, whilst adequately describing their structure.

### 3.3.3 *Accounting for agency*

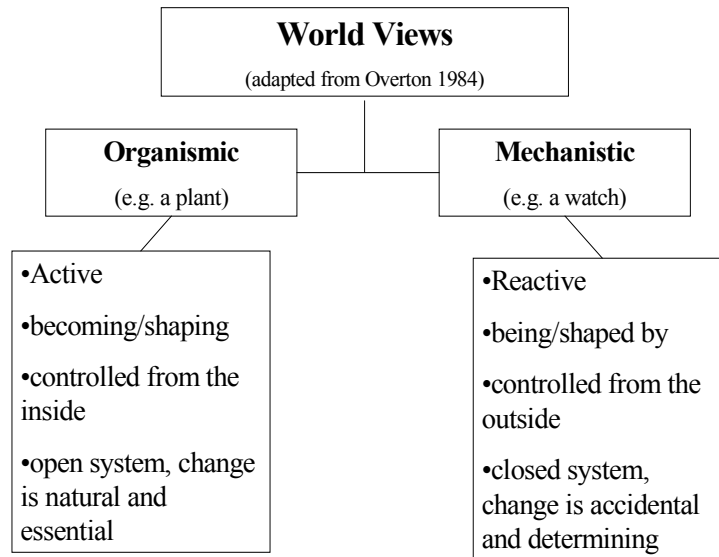
The term agency evokes notions of power. As Giddens (1984) outlines,

‘Agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place (which is why agency implies power: cf. *The Oxford English Dictionary* definition of an agent, as one who exerts power or produces an effect)’.

Giddens (1984, p. 96, brackets and italics in original)

By using a social theory, which accounts for agency, the ability of human beings to act upon their world (within constraints) and issues of power are attended to. Wertsch (1998) states that a large quantity of research in the social sciences rests on assumptions, which were once the topic of much controversy. Many aspects of western psychology assume that agency is the property of the individual and that behaviour is either voluntary or involuntary (Wertsch, Tulviste and Hagstrom 1993). There has been little work on resolving these assumptions and the subsequent impact upon theory. In this section, the argument for a dialectical view of agency is revisited. This is characterised by a notion of human nature in which agents shape and are shaped by the contexts in which they are located. Social theory is reviewed further in search of an approach that accounts for a dialectical notion of agency.

Overton (1975, 1984) and Overton and Reese (1973, 1981) have argued that scientific research programs can be put into two rival programmes or world-views. By drawing on the works of Pepper, they refer to a world-view as a set of belief structures, which although general and abstract are held by a special interest group or community to exert influence on the construction of scientific theories. Science is not one conceptual language but is fragmented into different disciplines and further divided into subsets of beliefs, which adhere to certain theoretical families with common views of the world. Different world-views conceptualise agency in different ways. Overton (1975, 1984) and Overton and Reese (1973, 1981) classify and contrast two rival programs: organismic and mechanistic world-views. These also have their root in the notion of paradigms, developed by Kuhn (see Lazar 1998). Overton (1984) points out these rival programs have a historical hard core. This is the perception of human agency as an evolving organism, referred to as 'becoming' against the perception of human agency as mechanical, referred to as 'being'. The basic assumptions of each programme is simplified and outlined in figure 3.3.



**Figure 3.3: World-views (based on Overton 1984, pp. 202-203)**

Overton (1975, 1984) explains the characteristics of both world-views and their historical/philosophical development. To summarise, the metaphor of an organismic world-view is that of nature as a living organism, such as a plant. Such a position views the organism as active in knowingly constructing the known, rooted in Hegelian philosophy. Given adequate life support antecedents, the organism appears to follow stages of development, resulting in an end or output, which is indistinguishable from its genesis. It is therefore inappropriate for a researcher to plot this development from a single perspective of time or structure. Consequently, researchers have to take an interest in the whole of the organised structure, which is unstable and affected by minor changes. Change is subsequently viewed as being both natural and essential. Due to its inherent activity, the organismic world-view can be classified as an open system (Overton 1975), which is a system that continuously interchanges material and energy with the outside world and thus builds organisation and structure.

The metaphor of the mechanistic world-view is that of nature as a machine, such as a watch. Such a position views the mechanism as being shaped and reactive to its

environment, rooted in the position of Locke, who is cited by Overton (1975) as representing human beings as mirrors or blank slates, which acquire a copy of reality. Consequently, the mechanism is adaptive to any input or change in its environment. Research framed by this approach follows a set of assumptions, which include viewing the mechanism as being stable and, unless the environment is significantly altered, continuous. Thus, researchers concern themselves with the identification of contingent factors that explain behaviour and a reduction of analysis to correlative elements of the structure. This is the premise of Skinner's behaviourism' (Skinner 1938) and its stimulus-response hypothesis, and more sophisticated information processing theories. Such theories view change as incidental yet determining. Overton (1975) therefore describes the mechanistic world-view as a closed system, one which seeks balance and equilibrium.

Both organismic and mechanistic world-views are indicative of the spirit of twentieth century theories. In critiquing social theories, Wertsch et al (1993) have argued that psychological theories are grounded in individualism, which neglect the interaction between society and mind. Resnick (1994, p.231) articulates the problem well, 'when people observe patterns or structures in the world they tend to assume that patterns are created by 'lead or by seed'', ignoring relationships between the two. Thus, agency is attributed to individuals or social structures. Either position reduces one level of analysis into another and assumes power of one over the other. To understand the relationship between interactional and institutional levels of analysis, it is necessary to adopt an approach that resolves these problems. A theoretical approach is needed which not only accounts for integrated levels of analysis but also accounts for a dialectical view of agency, where behaviour is considered to be neither uniquely innate nor determined, neither completely free nor totally constrained.

A number of theories, e.g. symbolic interactionism and Dewey's (1922) pragmatism, present human behaviour as problem solving adaptation of the environment. It is suggested individuals operate under habit until they are confronted by crisis, at this point a new conscious operation is needed and the formation of new habit. A cultural ambivalence follows, requiring individuals and groups to redefine their social situations.

The actual resources for doing this are derived from society, which the individual belongs to, appropriates and potentially re-shapes. Filmer et al (1998) describes how this approach views human conduct as neither mechanical nor explainable in terms of innate laws. It suggests behaviour can only be studied by gaining access to the socially shaped meanings, which guide it. Theories such as symbolic interactionism attempt to provide an account of agency as dialectical, even if they are criticised for theorising individual agency as rooted in social processes (e.g. Goff 1980).

According to Hodgkinson and Bloomer (2001), Bourdieu warns of the danger of exaggerating the importance of agency, as agents do not act in full knowledge of the facts. Instead, there needs to be a focus on 'practical sense' (agency related to context), which returns the writer to some of the limitations of ethnomethodology, previously discussed. The weakness of Bourdieu's approach is that despite acknowledging power, subjects themselves appear powerless. They can question and transform aspects of their field but their capacity for doing this is limited. Yet, importantly, this argument reminds theorists that human agents do not act with an inexhaustible repertoire of strategies.

Many of the aspects of theories so far critiqued are united by a view of human interaction regulated by the production, reproduction and potential modification of cultural artefacts (e.g. language). These artefacts enable and constrain human actions. They allow human beings to operate in the world in a way which would not be possible via the biological faculties alone yet they also constrain actions by setting rules to govern them. Culture reproduces these artefacts for the acquisition of subsequent generations. Human agency is incorporated into these processes by theorising the capacity of individuals to modify artefacts at any stage in their reproduction (Tomasello 1999).

Such a dialectical view of human agency can be found in the concept of *praxis* utilised by Giddens's structuration theory (Cassell 1993) and cultural psychological approaches (Cole 1996). In attempting to integrate micro and macro levels of analysis, structuration theory views micro events as producing and reproducing social systems via intended and unintended consequences of human actions. The task of the social theorist is then to



transcend micro/macro levels of analysis to conceptualise social and individual transformation as interrelated processes (Hay 1995). It is difficult to do this without downplaying agency. To resolve this, Giddens (1981a) revisits the concept of praxis. This re-emphasises the connection between language and social practice. Praxis is neither freedom nor determinism but:

an ontological term, expressing a fundamental trait of human social existence. To speak of human social activity as *Praxis* is to reject every conception of human being as ‘determined object’ or as unambiguously ‘free subject’. All human action is carried on by knowledgeable agents who both construct the social world through their action, but whose action is also conditioned or constrained by the very world of their creation.

(Giddens 1981, pp. 53-54, italics in original)

Agency is therefore seen as neither totally free nor constrained and structure becomes both the medium and the outcome of the production and reproduction of social practices. This ‘structure’ provides sets of context-related rules and resources, which frame action (Cassell 1993). The concept of resources makes the exercise of power possible because their possession is differential. In acting according to the rules, structure is reproduced. However individuals have the capacity to modify these rules and transform context at any moment in time.

In its theorisation of agency, structuration theory conceptualises processes of cultural production and transformation in which conflict and its resolution assume a pivotal role. The concept of structuration integrates levels of analysis and theorises human agency as both enabled and constrained by social structures. The limitations of structuration theory include its overemphasis on the micro level of analysis in which structure is reproduced or transformed, and its lack of description of the precise and heterogeneous nature of these structures. These limitations can be overcome to some degree by CHAT, presented and critiqued in the next chapter. Cole (1996) acknowledges the similarities between structuration theory and cultural-psychological approaches, which include CHAT. They both utilise the concept of praxis to explain human agency and integrate micro and macro levels of analysis in their approach to research.

Cultural psychological theories first became attractive to the development of this thesis through one of its branches; Wertsch's (1998) theory of mediated action, which has some similarities to Habermas' communicative action (May 1996, Outhwaite 1996). This was because its theorisation of mediated relationships between subjects and objects to which individual and collective actions are orientated related well to notions of goal frustration within the literature on conflict theory. The concept of mediation also allowed language and macro levels of analysis to be incorporated into the approach.

Chapter four shows that the field of cultural psychology contains several branches and argues that CHAT offers a number of advantages over both Giddens' (Cassell 1993) and Wertsch's (1998) approaches. CHAT has been developed in divergent ways by different theoreticians (Daniels 2001a). From these alternatives, chapter four proceeds to argue the particular utility of Engestrom's (1998b, 1999a) development of the field and the 'activity system' as a unit of analysis for this study. These advantages include its description of the specific elements of human activity against which cultural processes and differences can be analysed, and its emphasis on collective activity with socially distributed motives in contrast to an emphasis on action alone (Engestrom 1999a). Hay (1995) has criticised structuration theory for its emphasis on action and consequent elevation of individual agency by displacing conventional approaches to structure. With some similarities to communicative action it under theorises the effect of macro events on social regulation at the micro level. By modelling interconnected activity systems in chapters four and five, the relationship between the activity of conflict resolution in schools and that of a training agency (WMQPEP) are represented. In doing so, social and individual transformation are theorised and modelled as interrelated processes.

### 3.4 Summary and critical commentary

Chapter three has introduced and demonstrated some of the epistemological dilemmas facing researchers conducting evaluations of interventions. In doing so, positivist and anti-positivist approaches to investigating the research topic have been contrasted, highlighting their different ontological views of human behaviour and epistemological implications for the study of interventions and outcomes. The implications of the selection of CHAT as a theoretical approach for research, will be outlined and critiqued in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

The methods adopted by a study reveal a great deal about a researcher's view of the world and theory of knowledge. Chapter three showed that a positivist approach to the research question is closely related to an objective view of social reality (Cohen and Manion 1994). This views the world as external, fixed and determining and uses numerate techniques to measure the world as it actually is. In doing so, Ratner (1997) argues that psychological phenomena are expressed as overt behaviours, which can be directly observed. Although such approaches may yield summative data against which to evaluate the effectiveness of an intervention, the methodology yields little or no cultural analysis of the processes underpinning the relationships identified. Furthermore, because of the erroneous assumptions upon which research is undertaken Ratner (1997) argues that positivism manipulates the research process to impose connections and significance that may not necessarily be there.

A positivist approach is inappropriate for fully understanding the implementation of peer mediation services in schools. Whereas such an approach may generate a wealth of statistical data to analyse whether peer mediation was or was not successful it will not tell us why and how. Given the need for such interventions to be supported by whole school approaches (Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997, Smith and Sharp 1994, Stacey et al 1997) identified in the previous chapter and limited knowledge concerning the nature of school transformation over time and why some interventions fail (Visser et al 2000), an approach is needed which accounts for cultural processes.

In contrast to positivism, an anti-positivist approach credits the individual with a greater role in making sense of and shaping their setting. It is difficult to deduce causal relationships because social reality constitutes a web of complex interconnections, which have different meanings for different people (Miles and Huberman 1994). Rather than the world being seen as an array of independent variables, the world is viewed as subjective and cultural. In order to comprehend processes of social and individual transformation in settings such as schools, a theoretical approach is required that is able to explain the spatial and temporal complexities of cultural processes. Minimally, this requires a description of how interventions such as peer mediation do or do not transform cultural practices in schools and the relationship between these processes to the creation of new possibilities for thinking and acting. Thus, the research question is reframed as ‘what are the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services for interpersonal conflict resolution in schools?’

To answer this question it is necessary to theorise the relationships between interactional and institutional levels of analysis, in this case between the individual, the institution and the training agency. In doing so, questions regarding structure and agency are raised (Hay 1995). Social theories are reviewed to provide a number of alternative approaches that integrate micro and macro levels of analysis, whilst maintaining a view of human agency as neither totally free nor constrained. The selection of a theoretical approach is a significant step in the development of the thesis. The approach chosen corresponds with the writer’s own view of the world and developing theory of knowledge, which will inform the research design and provide the concepts used to explain data collected as part of the study (Clough and Nutbrown 2002). Hence, the rigorous review of social theories contained within this and the next chapter is justified. However, the review of approaches contained within this chapter is at a theoretical level and hence rather abstract. It is therefore worth elaborating on how each approach informs potential ways of answering the research question and highlighting why cultural psychological approaches are favourable.

A number of theories were reviewed that integrate levels of analysis through the study of language. Symbolic interactionism (Mead 1934) theorises that social structures such as the school, and interventions in schools, produce language used by pupils and teachers to act within these structures. Research might proceed by searching for evidence of semiotic devices, produced at the macro level by intervention, contained within speech at the micro level. In some contrast, an approach informed by communicative action (Habermas 1981) might analyse how the ‘lifeworld’ of the school has been shaped by the intervention. For example, such an approach might scrutinise how changes to procedures for dealing with conflict or policies on behaviour management have been modified at the macro level of analysis in light of transformation at the micro level. Similarly, the analysis of discourse (e.g. Foucault 1995) might analyse how language at the macro level of analysis regulates behaviour at the micro level and how its production has changed during and since intervention.

In critique of these approaches it was argued that an emphasis on the study of language condensed one level of analysis into the other and thus under theorised and under-described context, its sources of power and its interconnected nature (Star 1996). These approaches presented different but equally lop-sided views of agency (May 1996), i.e. individual behaviour as socially determined or social structures as the coordination of individual actions. The concept of agency is important to the research question because it cannot be assumed that intervention will determine transformation at any level of analysis (Wertsch et al 1993). In schools particularly, pupils and teachers will respond subjectively to potential and actual changes in objective circumstances and the approach to research needs to be sensitive to this.

A number of other approaches were reviewed that integrate levels of analysis by theorising interconnected levels of context. Bourdieu’s (Bourdieu 1991, Bourdieu and Passeron 2000) concepts of habitus, capital and field, Giddens’ (Cassell 1993) structuration theory in a subsequent section, and cultural psychological approaches (Cole 1996) were critiqued in this regard. Research could utilise Bourdieu’s (Connolly 1998) concepts to investigate the types of capital produced by peer mediation training in a

particular field (the school) and how the intervention affected each pupil's habitus (repertoire of conflict resolution strategies). However, it was argued that concepts such as habitus and field, like lifeworld, lack a theoretical account of their structure and differences between these structures in different contexts (Bernstein 2000), which may be critically important in understanding how structures are or are not transformed by intervention in different schools.

Cultural psychological approaches were introduced as an approach that integrates levels of analysis whilst conceptualising human agency as dialectical. Such approaches present a theory of culture, where human behaviour shapes and is shaped by inter-penetrating layers of context (Cole 1996). Both cultural psychology and structuration theory utilise the concept of praxis to understand human agency, where individuals either reproduce or transform their surrounding structures. In light of this notion, interventions in schools can be understood as the potential modification of structure that may or may not be reproduced or further transformed by agents.

Cultural psychology is an umbrella term for a family of theories, which include sociocultural theory and cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT). Both are rooted in developments of theory initiated by Vygotsky (Vygotsky 1978, 1981a, 1981b, 1987a, 1987b) and utilise the concept of mediation to integrate the individual and the societal into a single unified analytical framework. However, the emphases of these two approaches differ considerably (similar to that between communicative action and structuration theory). Sociocultural theory emphasises semiotic mediation and CHAT emphasises activity. In the next chapter, sociocultural theory and CHAT will be outlined in greater detail, which will include an account of their theoretical inheritance and development. Of the two, CHAT is favoured and the reasons for this selection presented. CHAT (Engestrom 1998a, 1998b, 1999a) offers a number of advantages over sociocultural theory and others. The next chapter argues that the third generation of CHAT is particularly useful in theorising the structure of human activity and how elements of this activity are produced by interconnected activity systems. The strengths and weaknesses of the approach for answering the research question will be identified

and developed where necessary. Its unique epistemological implications for conducting research will also be introduced.

The selection of CHAT as a theoretical approach for conducting research marks a significant epistemological shift from the naïve evaluation planned at the onset of this study, which was underpinned by an ontological view of human behaviour as predominantly determined by social structures. The categorisation of world views (figure 3.3) by Overton (1975, 1984) and Overton and Reese (1973, 1981) is useful in understanding this shift. The initial idea of collecting measures of school-violence/bullying before and after peer mediation training was underpinned by a mechanistic world-view. Here, behaviour is seen as controlled from the outside. Therefore, adjusting an aspect of the environment should result in an easily measurable change in behaviour. An organismic world-view is no more appropriate, as children clearly do not resolve conflict using innate strategies unshaped by their environments. Rather, a cultural psychological world-view posits reality as a dialectical process between forces originating from both the inside and outside. Children learn to use tools produced by culture to regulate their own behaviour. Thus, attention to the relationship between the production of new tools in schools and the opportunities they create for new behaviour constitutes the explanatory mechanism needed to theorise processes of social and individual transformation.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE MERITS AND LIMITATIONS OF CULTURAL-HISTORICAL ACTIVITY THEORY FOR INVESTIGATING THE RESEARCH TOPIC**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter three contrasted different ways of investigating the research topic and argued the need to include cultural processes in the analysis. To understand the implementation of peer mediation services in schools, it is necessary to investigate the effect of potential transformation of social practices in schools upon the production of opportunities for new ways of thinking and acting. This demands a theoretical approach that integrates institutional and interactional levels of analysis in a manner that posits human agency as neither totally free nor constrained. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the reasons for the selection of CHAT from alternatives reviewed in the previous chapter and its utility for investigating the research topic. This is an important exercise, as CHAT will provide the guiding principles and concepts to inform the design and analysis of empirical research, and ultimately the conclusions made.

Chapter four outlines the philosophical roots of CHAT and its development by three generations of theorists. In doing so, it is demonstrated that the concept of mediation, the emphasis on collective activity and the production of elements of activity by interacting activity systems, synthesise the cultural and the individual as mutually constitutive components of a single analytical framework. The nature of mediation is two-directional; culturally produced artefacts and tools are internalised to shape consciousness in ways that would not otherwise exist and they are also used by agents to shape the activity in which they were produced (Daniels 2001a). This notion of mediation defines the dialectical nature of human agency. The tool shapes the wielder who shapes the world through using the tool (Cole 1996).



Cultural psychology contains several theoretical branches. Overviews of the field (Chaiklin, Hedegaard and Jensen 1999, Cole 1996, Daniels 2001a, Engestrom Miettinen and Punamaki 1999) identify and critique these different approaches. These texts are used to guide the selection of relevant literature for review and introduce the key issues against which to examine the material. The field is dichotomised by approaches that concentrate on either activity (e.g. CHAT) or semiotic mediation (e.g. sociocultural theories) as foci of analysis (Tulviste 1999). CHAT presents a number of advantages over sociocultural theories for the demands of this study. The emphasis of CHAT on practical activity, rather than semiotic mediation, includes the structure of the social world as well as language in its analysis. In sociocultural theory, the structure of the social world (including issues such as power and conflict) is condensed into the study of language alone (Star 1996).

Engestrom's (1998b) 'activity system' models the structural components of activity and provides concepts under which to investigate and explain their transformation. The activity system is adopted as a unit of analysis by this study to depict conflict resolution in schools and how elements of this activity may or may not be transformed by an interacting system (e.g. WMQPEP, the peer mediation training provider). Engestrom (1998b, 1999c) places particular emphasis on the analysis of contradictions as potential forces for social change. These may be caused by agents questioning aspects of their practice and/or innovative elements of activity produced by interacting systems. Such contradictions are potentially illuminating of factors that may enable or constrain processes of social and individual transformation caused by intervention.

Whereas Engestrom provides an elaborate theory of the cultural and historical production of outcomes, Daniels (2001a, 2001b) argues that the production of the tool itself is overlooked. To overcome this limitation, the theories of Bernstein (1981, 2000) are incorporated into the theoretical approach. The combination of these two approaches shows how principles of power and control, represented by the base of an activity system, are structured to produce principles of communication that regulate psychological

possibilities. This is achieved by applying Bernstein's (2000) concepts of classification and framing to refine CHAT's concepts of division of labour and rules into a more specific language of description.

In the summary and critical commentary at the end of this chapter, a minimal unit of analysis is presented depicting the relationship between the peer mediation training agency (WMQPEP) and the activity of conflict resolution in schools. This relationship can be understood as the production of an alternative model of activity, which may or may not create contradictions or conflicts between traditional and innovative practices in schools that may or may not result in transformation. The integration of Bernstein's (2000) theories with CHAT is useful in understanding the social relations underpinning these alternatives. The elaborated theoretical approach is close to what is needed to understand the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services in schools.

## **4.2 The development of CHAT**

### *4.2.1 Philosophical influences*

Kozulin (1996) states that the most dramatic event in the history and employment of the concept of activity as a theoretical construct in social science occurred in the 1930s under the guidance of Vygotsky. However, the roots of CHAT can be traced back to the writings of Kant, Hegel and particularly Marx. Tolman (2001) describes how 'activity' was important to Kant because he was interested in the moral capacity of human beings to determine their own actions, termed the 'categorical imperative' (Walker 1998). It did not, however, achieve the status of a fundamental category. Hegel inherited this incomplete interest in practical activity, which was to have a profound influence on social theory, through its impact on Marx (Jensen 1999). Although Marx rejected Hegel's idealistic account of history as the development of higher mental processes resulting from

contradictions and resolutions between thesis and antithesis, he was impressed with the notion of dialectics.

According to Engestrom (1998a) and Jensen (1999), Marx's seminal Third Thesis on Feuerbach (1845), attempted to expose the pitfalls of idealism and materialism in social theory at that time. These contrasting positions were characterised by an emphasis on the dualism inherited from Descartes between mind/subject and world/object. According to Damasio (1996), Descartes had over-emphasised the position that rational decisions were the product of logic alone. This is in contrast to a materialist account, which represents the world (including the mind) as constituted by matter alone. In developing a dialectical version of materialism, the subsequent work of Marx (see Kamenka 1983) initiated a view of human nature, centred around the concept of 'praxis', where mind was shaped socially but was also capable of reshaping the world from which it was generated.

This emphasis on activity/praxis represented the resolution of a particular problem in philosophy for Marx (Jensen 1999). Jensen (1999) describes how philosophical tradition was dominated by two positions. The first is a foundationalist/idealist position, which gave primacy to philosophical categories in attempting to direct practice and science. In another tradition, philosophy is too late to guide practice and is responsive to science and practice. Marx (Kamenka 1983) argued that the production of knowledge and ideas becomes material itself, which is continuously aggregated and reshaped. Therefore, it was not the purpose of philosophy to predict or model the world but to change it (Jensen 1999).

Goff (1980) argues that Marx rejected any notion of society as the sum of individual actions or the reduction of individuals to material reality. Instead, the concept of praxis was suggested as reality for human beings. The concept of 'praxis' synthesises the humanising of nature with the naturalising of human conduct, a relationship, which is both simultaneously ideal and material. Goff (1980) outlines further that 'praxis' involves the relationship between human beings with their given faculties and a physical nature that is the object of these faculties in respect to the fulfilment of a need. This concept was

attractive to Vygotsky (Tolman 1999) because of its emphasis on culture over biology. Kozulin (1996, p. 103) states that Vygotsky adopted the position that ‘human behaviour and mind must be considered in terms of purposive and culturally meaningful actions rather than as biological, adaptive reactions’. The development of praxis is described by Goff (1980) and is summarised below:

1. The first moment of praxis is the production of material itself, the means to satisfy needs. By producing the means of their own subsistence, humans directly produce their actual material life.
2. The second act is the satisfaction of new needs produced as a direct result of the first act.
3. Thirdly, the fulfilment of activity brings about the need for relationships, community and sociality.
4. Finally, consciousness is generated as means to cohering praxis, creating intersubjectivity for the fulfilment of more complex needs. Transformation is thus seen as an essential aspect of praxis; human beings shape and are shaped by their world.

Thus, in activity, the origins of a theoretical approach, which is non-reductive and non-deterministic, are initiated. It is non-reductive because human behaviour is seen as social and orientated towards collective needs. It is non-deterministic because the means of fulfilling these needs are both active and reactive.

One of the aims of CHAT, developed by Vygotsky (1978, 1981a, 1981b, 1987a, 1987b) and later by Leontiev (1978) was to utilise this notion of activity to resolve a number of assumptions, which dominated western/Russian psychology in the 1920s and 1930s (Kozulin 1996, 1999). These included heuristics such as agency belongs to the individual and behaviour is either voluntary or involuntary (Wertsch et al 1993). The initial approach of CHAT was motivated by a desire to transform Marx’s Theses on Feuerbach (1845) into a new understanding of human behaviour and to resolve the bipolar positions

of psychoanalysis (particularly) and reflexology (Engestrom 1998a). As Kozulin (1996) outlines,

Vygotsky's major objection to the mentalistic tradition was that it confined itself to a vicious cycle of theorising in which states of consciousness are explained through the concept of consciousness. Reflexology, in its turn, suggested an equally lopsided solution by banning consciousness altogether and attempting to reduce all psychological phenomena to reflex-like behaviour'.

(Kozulin 1996, p. 100)

Instead, a new theoretical approach was initiated, which used concepts of 'artefact-mediation' and 'object-orientated activity' to demonstrate how human beings are both shaped by and shape the world respectively. In doing so, the beginnings of an approach are suggested, which can be used to conceptualise the relationships between different levels of analysis that conceptualise human agency as dialectical.

#### *4.2.2 Mediatlional tools/artefacts*

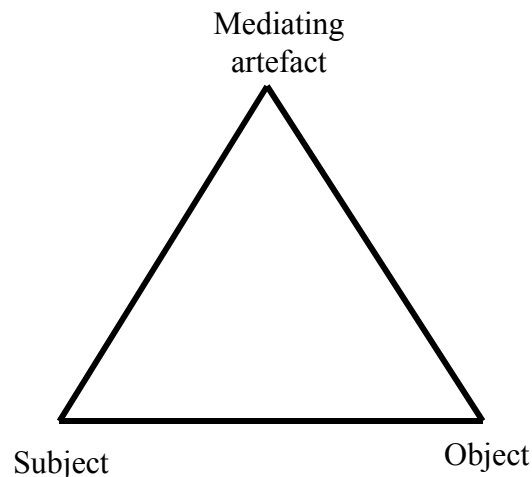
Vygotsky (1978) showed that language as one type of mediational tool or artefact is first used as a means of communication of shared actions between adults and children. From this premise, Vygotsky (1981b, van der Veer and Valsiner 1991) drawing on Darwin (Darwin 1859) as another influence formulated 'the genetic law of cultural development', according to which, cultural development as distinct to genetic evolution appears twice.

Any function of the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First it appears on the social plane, and then on the psychological plane. First it appears between people as an inter-psychological category and then within the child as an intra-psychological category.

(Vygotsky 1981b, p.163)

The use of mediational tools to internalise culture implies that the 'group' is embedded in the production of cultural artefacts that are later represented internally as psychological

functions. Vygotsky (1978) initially represented this as a triangular model of S-X-R, where S and R were the concepts of ‘stimulus’ and ‘response’ loaned from behaviourism and the X was representative of the culturally developed mediating tool or artefact. Figure 4.1 is a reformulation of Vygotsky’s triangular model, where the terms subject and object are used instead of stimulus and response and the term mediating artefact instead of X (Daniels 2001a, Engestrom 1998a).



**Figure 4.1: The common reformulation of Vygotsky’s model of mediated action (Daniels 2001a, p. 86)**

In doing so, Vygotsky offered a unit of analysis, which transcends the boundary between the individual and the group and thus avoids reductionism. Cole (1996), Engestrom (1998a) and Wertsch (1998) describe how a human individual never reacts directly with their environment; there is an irreducible tension between human beings and the means by which the world is mediated (Bateson 1972, Wertsch 1991, 1998). The culturally produced nature of mediating artefacts posits the group and individual in symbiosis. Davydov (1999) describes how natural relationships shown by the base of the triangle are subsumed by cultural ones at the vertex of the triangle. This is not a case for removing

the base (Cole 1996) as human beings still retain a direct relationship physically with their environments.

Vygotsky's (1981b) genetic law of cultural development is distinct from the propositions of symbolic interactionism discussed in the previous chapter. Daniels (1993) argues that although a superficial analysis of Mead and Vygotsky suggests similarities (e.g. Valsiner and van der Veer 1988), the development of their ideas is associated with different projects. Mead (1934) was concerned with communication and interpersonal interaction, whereas Vygotsky was concerned with activity as a social product and its historical development. Symbolic interactionists assume a position of prominence to language as the medium of the social construction of reality. According to Daniels (1993), the mediational nature of language suggested simultaneous processes of internalisation and externalisation for Vygotsky and he distanced himself from the deterministic suggestion that the social context of development was the objective environment. Instead, he favoured a dialectical-materialist account. Internalisation was not seen as a process of copying external reality, which was then socially malleable. The mechanism at issue was the mastery of external signs, thus crediting individuals with greater agency.

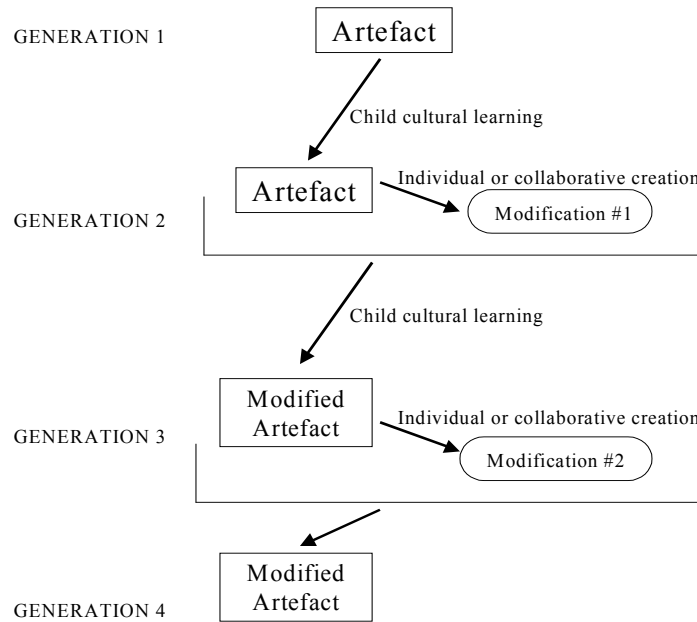
The internalising/externalising properties of tool use refute any notion of human agency as totally free or constrained (Hedegaard 2001). Hedegaard (2001) has represented dialectical relationships between subject and mediational artefact and between mediational artefact and object on Vygotsky's original model of mediated action (figure 4.1). In doing so, she shows that mediational artefacts can account for how signs and symbols of external reality are mastered by subjects but also how subjects can use mediational artefacts as tools to modify external reality. This subsumes Habermas' (Outhwaite 1996) account of tools as both expressive/communicative and instrumental (Engestrom 1999a). This relationship is neither a singular route of action or reaction but builds upon Hegel-Marxian philosophy, where agency is a dialogic process of constructing and reconstructing activity and its components. Wartofsky (1973) and Cole (1996) have also similarly presented mediating artefacts as being both actual (material) and symbolic/tertiary (ideal). Thus the object which human activity is directed at is

simultaneously conceptual and behavioural. Activity is the objectified side of psychological phenomena and psychological phenomena are the subjective processes of activity (Leontiev 1978).

Bruner (1999) describes processes of internalisation and externalisation in child development. Newborn babies and infants are not bundles of passiveness born into a world of confusion. They are in fact born with structure, which enables them to be active and begin to make sense of the world, evident in their ability to alter stimuli (Wood 1989). An example of this is how an infant's unsuccessful attempt to grab an object is interpreted by an adult as a gesture, which facilitates entry into an intersubjective world. Thus, a symbol (a point) is created, which mediates joint attention and interaction. These cultural symbols are re-learned (and potentially reshaped) by every generation (Tomasello 1999).

Understanding of how human beings act upon and modify their world is complemented by Tomasello's research (1999). This unites evolution theory and cultural psychology by discussing the differences in cognition between humans and other primates. He argues that the appearance early in human ontogeny of the capacity for intersubjectivity and subsequent symbolic representation allows the development of unique mental abilities. There hasn't been enough time in biological evolution for the extensive cognitive skills used by humans to have developed one at a time, rather they are all by-products of one genetic maturation. This is the development of intersubjectivity, the ability to understand members of the same species as beings like themselves, which then generates pedagogy and enables the transmission of culture.





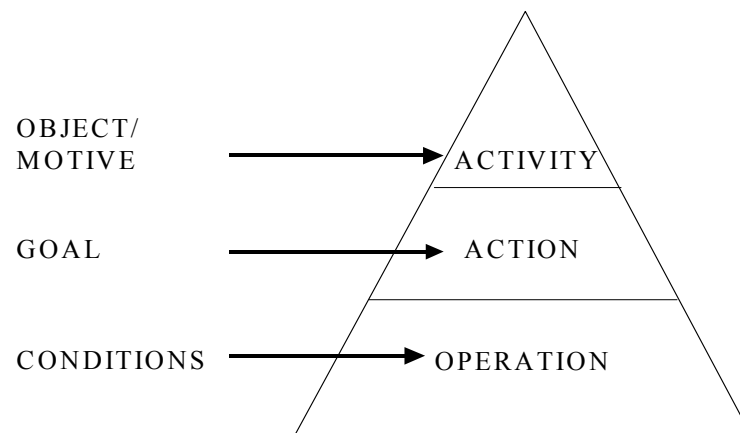
**Figure 4.2: The ratchet effect (Tomasello 1999, p. 38)**

Tomasello suggests ‘the ‘ratchet effect’ (1999, p. 38), shown in figure 4.2, as a cultural mechanism for the creation, development and storage of cultural artefacts with accumulated modifications for subsequent generations to re-learn and modify themselves. The production and modification of cultural tools was an important consideration for Vygotsky (Hedegaard, Chaiklin and Jensen 1999) in explaining differences between humans and animals. Humans construct tools and the procedures for using them (knowledge) over both historical and phylogenetic time. They are used in social interaction to change conditions of existence and are made accessible to future generations. This exemplifies how human agency is dialectical; it both shapes and is shaped by culture. Tomasello’s (1999) ratchet effect is helpful in understanding cultural development and has relevance to how interventions in schools are theorised. Interventions can be conceptualised as the production and/or modification of cultural artefacts. Thus, one of the processes to analyse during empirical research is how peer mediation training produces alternative cultural artefacts to those existing in schools and

how resolution of contradictions or conflicts between alternatives results in social and individual transformation.

#### *4.2.3 Collective activity*

Vygotsky's (1978) model of mediated action (figure 5.1) presents a unit of analysis that integrates individual and group levels of analysis. However, other parties are only represented by their role in the production of mediating artefacts. Leontiev's (1978, 1981) elaboration of mediated action is the first step to achieving greater representation of other mediating parties.

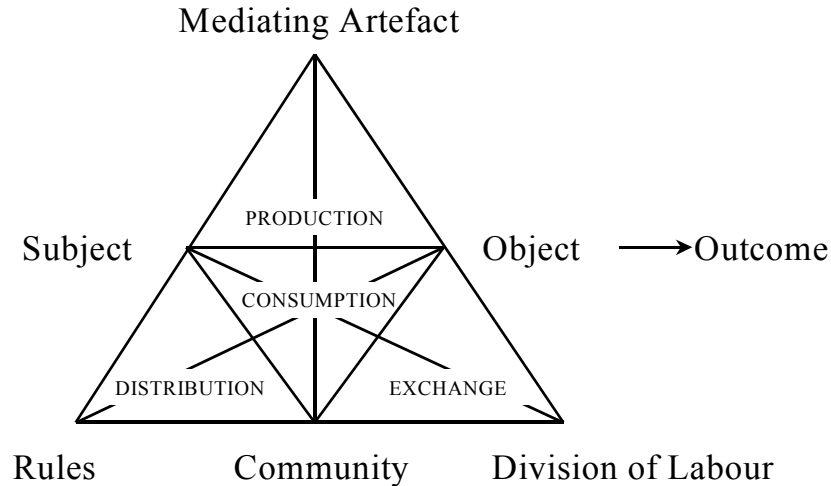


**Figure 4.3: Leontiev's hierarchy of activity (Leontiev 1978, p. 62)**

Leontiev (1978) distinguishes between three hierarchical levels of activity, shown in figure 4.3. The model suggests that individual operations and actions are subordinated to

a motive or 'object' of collective activity. Leontiev (1978) uses primeval hunting as an illustration (see Morris 1994 for a similar account). When members of a tribe are hunting, they individually have separate goals and they are in charge of diverse actions. Each may involve the use of distinct tools/operations appropriate to the immediate conditions. Some might be frightening a herd of animals to send them towards other hunters who will kill the prey, others may prevent the animal escaping via the flanks and other members may have other tasks. These actions have immediate goals, but are subordinated to a greater motive: the group hunt and its outcomes of providing food and clothes. To understand why the separate actions are meaningful, the motive of the whole activity needs to be analysed and how labour is divided in orientation to a shared object. This overcomes the preoccupation of structuration theory (Giddens 1981, Cassell 1993, May 1996) with action, emphasising how goals are socially distributed (Engestrom 1999a). Such collective forms of activity are attributed as the generators of extended consciousness, intersubjectivity, sophisticated forms of communication and the cultural products made possible by such developments (Marx/Kamenka 1983, Leontiev 1978, 1981, Tomasello 1999).

Leontiev is referred to as being from the second generation of activity theorists by Engestrom (1998a), who describes how Leontiev took Marx's concept of labour as the dominant paradigm and began to think about how activity is structured. This focuses attention on how activity occurs in conditions of collective practice and object orientation. Hedegaard and Sigersted (1992) and Engestrom (1987, p.78) have developed and depicted Leontiev's ideas into a model, shown in figure 4.4.



**Figure 4.4: The human activity system (Engestrom 1987, p.78)**

The development of this model has a history itself (Hedegaard and Sigersted 1992). Writers such as Ill'enkov (1977) began to analyse how internal contradictions within an activity system were the driving force for change and development. Ill'enkov (1977), Hedegaard and Sigersted (1992) and Engestrom (1998b) starting with Vygotsky's original triangular model, have shown how each dimension of the original activity system could be ruptured, resulting in the extension of the model (as in figure 4.4) to include division of labour, community and rules. Although this represents a useful branch of CHAT, others have adopted different approaches, criticising the activity system for being too condensed, Hedegaard (2001) particularly.

Engestrom (1998b) shows how the first ruptures of the activity system characterise development from animal to human, and is summarised in the following paragraph. Lewontin is cited as suggesting that animal activity consists of relationships between an

individual animal, other members of the same species and their environment. Direct relationships with the environment are ruptured by the use of tools (see also Tomasello 1999, Whiten, Goodall, McGrew, Nishida, Reynolds, Sugiyama, Tutin, Wrangham and Boesch 1999), shown in figure 4.1. The relationship between the individual and other members of the same species is ruptured by emerging rules and rituals and the relationship between other members of the same species and the environment is ruptured by division of labour. In doing so, what was once natural is transformed into a cultural product (Engestrom 1998b). These include the dominant forms of human activity: consumption, distribution and exchange of production, all integral themes of the work of Marx, Durkheim and Weber (May 1996). By connecting each concept to all the others, figure 4.4 shows how each of these aspects of human activity are interrelated and that the unit of analysis is irreducible.

It is important to describe the components of the activity system at this stage. The subject refers to any individual, dyad or group, who takes the role of subject within a system of collective activity (Daniels, Cole and Visser 2000). The object is of crucial importance to the activity theorist as it connects individual actions to collective activity (Engestrom 1999a). It refers to the material or problem, which the motive and subsumed goals of the activity (Engestrom 1998b) are orientated. Mediational artefacts refer to any cultural product (ideal or material) involved in the transformation of an object into an outcome (Cole 1996). Activity is contextualised within a community of practice, which is orientated to the same object. Rules (both explicit regulations and implicit norms) and division of labour refer to how this collective system is organised (Chaiklin 2001b). ‘Division of labour’ subsumes how subjects are horizontally related to each other functionally and vertically by power and status. Clearly, different activities in schools involve rules, a complex division of labour and orientation to common objects mediated by culturally produced tools and the activity system can be used to map these relations.

The activity system incorporates multiple subjects but cannot yet be said to fully theorise human behaviour across levels of analysis, as these subjects are contextualised by one common and isolated activity. Schools, for example, are multi-functionary places

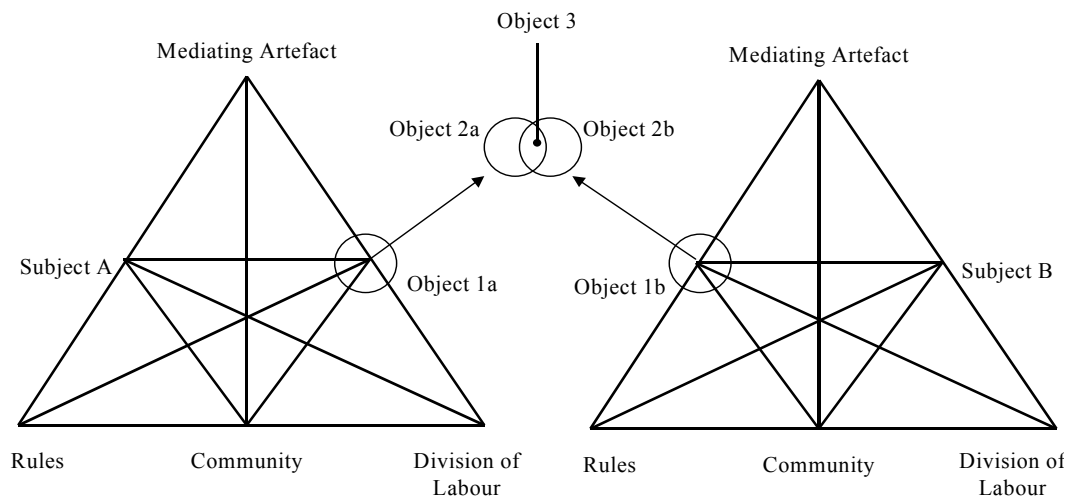
(Parsons 1999), which exist in a network of activities. Second generation theorists have applied the notion of the study of activity at the levels of operations, interaction and institutional transmission in pursuit of vertical development of higher psychological functions. Such a project was characteristic of views of human beings as superior in their evolution to their ancestors and other species (Gould 2000). Ironically, there was little sensitivity to cultural diversity in these early stages (Cole 1996, Engestrom 1998a). It is only cross-cultural analysis of activity and the study of interacting activity systems (including those that produce aspects of the activity under study) that offer the potential for a unit of analysis able to account for the relationship between interconnected levels of analysis, including those between individuals, institutions and interventions.

#### *4.2.4 Interconnected levels of analysis*

The research topic demands an investigation of processes of social and individual transformation. Hence, the theoretical approach selected needs to integrate levels of analysis. Cole and Engestrom (1993) argue the minimal unit of analysis for activity theorists is two interacting activity systems. This unit of analysis allows the relationship between a peer mediation training provider (WMQPEP) and the activity of conflict resolution in different schools to be modelled. In contrast, a reductive methodology, such as an exclusive emphasis on the individual, neglects cultural and inter-cultural processes and presents a number of limitations to the educational researcher. Cole (1996) asserts many studies assume that behaviour occurs in a cultural and historical vacuum. Aspects of human behaviour, bullying in schools for example (Salisbury and Jackson 1996), are often attributed as natural phenomenon because they seem normal within one cultural setting. Yet, when cross-cultural study is undertaken many of these behaviours can be observed as culturally divergent. For example, cultures spread both geographically and historically; have varied considerably in their ability to maintain peaceful relations with each other (Aronson 1999, Ferguson 1977). Cole (1996) cites Wundt as arguing that attempts to understand human activity better through psychological study need to address

the relationship between mind and culture. Notably different cultures have produced notably different minds. Implied in this observation is the point that notably different school cultures will offer their pupils and teachers notably different opportunities for dealing with conflict.

To overcome the restrictions of mono-cultural analysis, third generation activity theorists, such as Cole (1996) and Engestrom (1987, 1999b), have begun to look at the activity system in greater detail and across cultural situations. Their analysis includes multiple and interacting activity systems and close study of activity systems undergoing transformation (e.g. Engestrom, Brown, Christopher & Gregory 1997 and Engestrom 1999a, 1999b). Thus, two interacting activity systems are presented as the minimum unit of analysis for a third generation activity theorist, shown in figure 4.5.



**Figure 4.5: Two interacting activity systems as the minimum unit of analysis for a third generation activity theorist (based on Engestrom 1999b)**

This unit of analysis integrates micro and macro levels of analysis: mind and world, the individual and collective activity and interacting activities. However, Engestrom and Miettinen (1999) suggest that networks of activity systems still in no way represent development in society, rather they emphasise mediating artefacts.

According to Activity Theory, any local activity resorts to some historically formed mediating artefacts, cultural resources that are common to the society at large. Networks between activity systems provide for movement of artefacts.

(Engestrom and Miettinen 1999, p. 8)

In this sense, an activity system may represent a system, which produces an aspect of another's activity, for example the production of rules in schools by national/administrative policy. Thus, the micro and the macro are bridged and potential issues of power and influence between systems are also conceptualised. This is a critical milestone in the development of the thesis, as figure 4.5 can be used to represent the relationship between one activity system (WMQPEP, the peer mediation training provider) and another (conflict resolution in schools). The third generation of CHAT provides concepts under which to explain processes of social and individual transformation. Interestingly, this interconnected approach also allows the researcher to account for their own role in the process if they so wish. This point is made by Mercer (1995) in relation to a sociocultural approach but is equally applicable to a third-generational CHAT approach, as he describes:

One of the special attractions of the sociocultural approach is that it is reflexive – it accounts for the research process itself. It recognises that a researcher who observes and analyses talk is essentially just another language user, a listener, a passive participant in the process of teaching and learning. The researcher's aim is to understand what the active participant understands, and to use the same means that they use – language – to do so. And in doing so, the researcher ceases to be a mere passive observer, not only because they become part of the context of the process that they are observing, but because to make their analysis they inevitably have to engage in talk with the people they are observing...traditional distinctions between 'practitioners' and 'researchers' no longer apply.'

(Mercer 1995, p.122)



### 4.3 Activity versus semiotic foci of analysis

The third generation of CHAT has been chosen above other ‘cultural-psychological’ theories for this study. This section will briefly outline what the other choices were and why this selection was appropriate. Daniels (2001a) describes a number of approaches, which engage with cognition and behaviour in context and use non-deterministic and non-reductionist theories. These include CHAT, sociocultural approaches, situated learning models and distributed cognition. Tulviste (1999) suggests the cultural psychologist can employ two levels of analysis; these are activity and the tools/symbols used in activity. Each approach, discussed by Daniels (2001a), can be understood as emphasising either symbolic or activity levels of analysis. Another level of analysis, the personal, lies between the two. This reminds theorists that notions of individuality must not be lost in concentrating on either symbols or activity (Edwards 2001).

Models of situated learning (e.g. Brown, Collins and Duguid 1989) use and emphasise the genetic law of cultural development to emphasise the contextualisation of practice. It attempts to bridge the individual and group dichotomy by suggesting culture is reproduced in thought and action. The approach engages with concepts of ‘peripheral participation’ and ‘apprenticeship’ in attempting to account for the move from a novice or outsider to an expert within a community of practice. In contrast, distributed cognition recognises that knowledge is too immense to be known or utilised by individuals. Hence, it is stretched over networks of people and stored in mediational artefacts. This approach engages with the performance of group tasks using knowledge, which has been compartmentalised (e.g. Salomon 1993).

Both approaches are criticised by Daniels (2001a) for detracting attention from networked activities, argued previously as the minimum unit of analysis for an activity theorist and useful in representing the relationship between interventions and activity in

schools. The focus of Brown et al's (1989) analysis is on forms of situated practice rather than mediating artefacts, social relations, cultural values and patterns of change over time. Power is neglected because there is little attention to the structure of the situation (Hedegaard 1998). The third generation of CHAT subsumes these elements and conceptualises power by including the division of labour of collective activity and the influence of networked activities in its analysis.

Models of situated and distributed cognition are characteristic of a tension, which presently exists within the field between semiotics and activity as foci of analysis (Daniels 2001a). Situated cognition is closer to semiotic analysis (sociocultural approaches) and distributed cognition is closer to analysis of activity (CHAT). Wertsch's (1998) sociocultural approach of mediated action adopts a research position where context is omnipresent and condensed within the means that mediate actions, thus emphasising the ideal level of analysis. Engestrom (1993) argues this is dangerous because context (the material level of analysis) is assumed as a given and is under theorised in the analysis. It would be unwise to adopt such an approach for the topic of this research as an exclusive emphasis on language corresponds to a theory of mind where behaviour can be modified by rhetoric alone (Engestrom and Miettinen 1999). Understanding social and individual transformation demands that material practices as well as language are included in the analytical approach.

Daniels (2001a, p. 77) has summarised the strengths and weaknesses of three approaches to cultural psychology, which emphasise different foci of analysis: symbolic, personal and activity, shown in figure 4.6.

Approach	Strengths	Weaknesses
Symbolic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasises cognitive basis of psychological processes</li> <li>• Elaborates social content of psychological processes</li> <li>• Recognises social construction and sharing of concepts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overlooks practical activities</li> <li>• Symbols appear arbitrary</li> <li>• Minimises individual differences in concepts and processes</li> <li>• Indefinite process of social construction</li> </ul>
Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasises individual agency in constructing psychological phenomena from social influences</li> <li>• Emphasises individual differences in psychological phenomena</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overlooks practical activities, artefacts and conditions which affect psychology</li> <li>• Overlooks organised social action necessary to alter cultural and psychological phenomena</li> </ul>
Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasises action rather than pure cognition</li> <li>• Emphasises tools</li> <li>• Emphasises social agency</li> <li>• Recognises heterogeneity of psychological processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activity and tools are conceived as devoid of social content</li> <li>• Unclear about how activity organises psychological processes</li> <li>• Minimises individual agency</li> </ul>

**Figure 4.6: The strengths and weaknesses of three approaches to cultural psychology  
(Daniels 2001a, p. 77)**

The ‘activity’ level of analysis has limitations, which will be discussed towards the end of this chapter alongside some recent developments in theory. However, its strengths appear most pertinent for this study. This is because it emphasises how cultural practices in schools produce mediational tools to regulate psychological possibilities. This study concerns the processes and outcomes of transforming these cultural practices.

Tulviste (1999) argues ‘activity’ rather than the study of semiotic devices constitutes the most appropriate explanatory principle for researchers in cultural psychology. Tulviste

(1999) bases this argument on two key points. First the cross-cultural study of activity, initiated by Luria under Vygotsky's guidance showed that developmental differences (evident in tool/symbol use) were products of culture and not nature alone (see Cole 1996 for a similar discussion). The implication of this was that higher mental processes could then be developed by intervention and this constitutes an appropriate methodology for the study of human development. Second, an emphasis on the analysis of tool/symbol use alone neglects the object they are orientated to. Tools are not produced for their own sake; they are used in social and collective activity. Tulviste (1999) argues further that CHAT needs to move from its weaker occupation with the study of the mind to its stronger occupation with explaining mind and behaviour through its origin and development in activity. He critiques Cole's (1996) approach to activity as too contextual and descriptive. Engestrom (1999a, 1999b) is one of the few theoreticians in CHAT to concentrate his empirical work on the development of groups and their activity rather than cognitive processes alone.

Hence, CHAT is the theoretical approach selected to investigate the research topic of this study. This decision is based on its ability to theorise social and individual transformation as interrelated processes, including the structure of the social world in its analysis. CHAT provides several concepts under which to understand these processes and will inform the analysis of data collected as part of this study. Two limitations of CHAT require further consideration however. These are the need for greater description of i) processes of transformation and ii) the structural components of activity that produce cultural artefacts. These and developments in theory that attempt to solve these problems are discussed in the next section.

#### **4.5 The limitations of the activity system**

The nature and representation of collective human activity still attracts debate and critique regarding its constituency and associated methodology. This includes continuing dialogue around the nature of the unit of analysis (Davydov 1999a, 1999b, Daniels

2001a). Other areas of further investigation and theoretical debate include processes of transformation, the structure and components of activity, the nature of communication, and the role of interdisciplinarity across boundaries of practice (Davydov 1999a, 1999b). The field will also undoubtedly benefit in forthcoming years from greater attention to the role of emotions in cognition (Bakhurst 2001, Bruner 1990, Damasio 1996, 2000) and trajectory over time and contexts (Dreier 1999, Engestrom 2001).

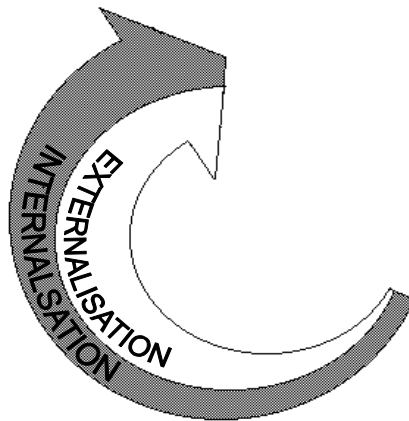
Daniels (1993, 2001a) argues that Vygotsky's writing on mediation and theoretical developments of his work since have not sufficiently engaged with an account of tool production/appropriation within and across activity contexts. Daniels (2001a) suggests the following as areas of under theorisation, which would benefit from development in contemporary CHAT research:

1. Insufficient empirical study of socio-institutional effects;
2. A tendency to under-theorise differences between schools in terms of institutional effects on the social formation of mind;
3. A tendency to focus either on the mediational function of semiotic means or on the activity;
4. The lack of a theory of the structure of psychological tools;
5. The lack of theory of its own constitution and recontextualisation.

Underlying Daniels' (2001a) critique is an argument of the need for greater understanding of socio-institutional effects and their transformation upon the production of psychological tools. The study of how the implementation of a peer mediation service may or may not create new social relations in schools with new possibilities for thinking and acting presents an opportunity to develop theory in this regard. Greater understanding of these processes may be achieved by synthesis of post-Vygotskian traditions of CHAT (e.g. Engestrom 1999a) with areas of social theory (e.g. Bernstein 2000).

*a) The transformation of activity*

To some theorists, the activity system may appear closed and rigid, static in time and shape. This is not intended as the activity system provides several concepts under which to understand cultural differences and their transformation. Although the study of transformation is implicit within CHAT, Davydov (1999a) argues that theory would benefit from elaboration of its nature. Greater description of processes of transformation is provided by Engestrom's (1999a) theory of expansive learning. One of the most common causes of activity system transformation is the conflict caused between a traditional and an innovative object (Engestrom 1999a). A traditional object is a current artefact or means of acting upon a problem and an innovative object is an alternative that presents a more efficient option, perhaps produced by another activity system. This is particularly the case in capitalist systems, where culturally more advanced elements of activity (e.g. a new technology) are innovated by interacting activity systems. Engestrom (1999a, 1999b, 1999c) has suggested the notion of expansive cycles to explain the relationship between systemic reproduction and transformation, and how institutions such as schools change over time. It is important to note the distinction between action time and activity time. Action time, related to single goal attainment, is linear and has a finite termination once achieved. Activity time concerns ongoing systemic problem solving and is cyclical.



**Figure 4.7: The expansive cycle (Engestrom 1999a, p. 34)**

An expansive cycle (figure 4.7) initially has an exclusive emphasis on internalisation and the reproduction of culture. As disruptions, contradictions and conflicts occur; the established cultural reproduction may be challenged in ways that make internalisation difficult. This may lead to a period of externalisation, where new ideas are tested and the structure of the activity system subjected to experimentation. Externalisation reaches its peak when a new model or means of solving a problem is implemented. As these new practices become established and dominant, the system returns to an emphasis on internalisation, where recently established norms are reproduced. Little is known about such change but Engestrom (1999a) proposes that for a historical understanding of activity, expansive cycles are of crucial importance for future research.

The theory of expansive learning represents another critical advance in the development of the thesis. An expansive cycle can be used to model the production of innovative objects by interventions in schools, such as peer mediation. Research can then proceed to examine the processes via which new elements of activity are or are not internalised and whether they expand opportunities for new ways of thinking and acting. Such understanding is aided by planning interventions on activity systems, which deliberately provoke transformation. This is the central methodology of ‘developmental work research’ currently being carried out by Engestrom and his associates at the University of Helsinki. This methodology is clearly relevant to the study of implementing peer mediation services in schools and will inform the empirical research design outlined in chapter six.

#### *b) The production of cultural artefacts*

Daniels (1993, 2001a) states that schools are often seen as institutions that are uniform in their psychological effects. The activity system provides elements for cross-institutional analysis. These include concepts of multiple voices, historically accumulated artefacts, rules and division of labour, all of which act as both resources for collective achievement

and transformation but also as sources of compartmentalisation and conflict. In Engestrom's work, Daniels (2001a) suggests the production and movement of the outcomes of collective activity has a rich theoretical account but the production of the tool itself does not. Greater understanding in this regard can be achieved by giving greater description to the structure of elements of activity, particularly its division of labour and rules, and how these differentially produce cultural artefacts that regulate psychological possibilities. This endeavour benefits from the marriage of CHAT with Bernstein's (2000) theory of cultural transmission. Engestrom, Brown, Christopher and Gregory's (1997) modelling of various subject-object configurations also elucidates greater description of ways of organising activity.

The work of Bernstein (Bernstein 2000) reminds theorists of the need to refine concepts into more specific descriptions of their modalities. It may be illuminating to give some thought to how the elements of activity are structured and how these structures produce different outcomes. This is important because interventions such as peer mediation may conflict with or transform these structures. Bernstein (1975, 1981, 2000, see also Daniels et al 1996, Daniels 2001b) has dedicated particular attention to how principles of power and control produce communicational structures that regulate psychological possibilities. In doing so, he resurrects Vygotsky's concern with the relationship between the development of mind and behaviour through its origin and development in activity, particularly the relationship between the division of labour within social relations and its impact upon psychological operations.

Bernstein's theory of cultural transmission (most accessibly articulated in Bernstein 2000) argues that schools translate principles of power and control into tools that regulate psychological possibilities. He uses concepts of classification and framing to distinguish these processes. Classification concerns principles of power. Bernstein (2000) argues that dominant power relations seek to establish boundaries between categories, be these between adults and children, genders, curriculum subjects or other categories. He thus states that classification can be strong or weak, depending upon the degree of insulation between these categories. The rule of strong classification is that things must be kept



apart and the rule of weak classification is things must be brought together. In simplistic terms, classification provides a description of the structure of the division of labour within an activity system.

Framing concerns principles of control (Bernstein 2000); it refers to the manner in which relations between categories are regulated, how power is enforced. Strong framing refers to explicit control and hierarchical relationships. Weak framing refers to less explicit control and more horizontal relations. In this sense, framing provides a description of the rules of an activity system. Overall, strong classification and framing in school organisation and pedagogic practice will be characterised by clear distinctions between such categories as teachers and pupils, and curriculum subjects combined with teacher control of social order and knowledge acquisition. In contrast, weaker classification and framing will be characterised by more horizontal relations between teachers and pupils and a more integrated approach to the development of knowledge, which will be consistent with the creation and management of order.

Bernstein's (2000) concepts make useful illustration of the principles of power and control underpinning two contrasting approaches to conflict resolution in schools: peer mediation and arbitration (Cohen 1995), introduced in section 2.5.1. Figure 4.8 contrasts these different models of activity once again, applying the concepts of classification and framing to each approach. Researchers of peer mediation (Griffith 1996, Stacey 1996, Tyrrell 1995) have highlighted that the implementation of such services in schools is sometimes constrained by teachers' unwillingness to modify their perceptions of authority. Hence, Bernstein's (2000) language of description may be useful in illuminating processes via which social relations, cultural practices and psychological possibilities are or are not transformed.

<b>Approach to conflict resolution</b>	<b>Peer mediation</b>	<b>Arbitration</b>
Classification and framing of principles of power and control	Weak	Strong
Relationship between disputants and third party	More horizontal	Vertical
Division of labour and rules	Problem solving approach to difficult conflicts, with key role for peers	Adjudication of conflicts by teacher according to set protocols of the school
Object orientation	Conflict underpinned by social needs in need of restoration	Conflict as a management issue, in need of punishment
Tools/discourse	Dialogue in which disputants agree a mutually satisfying outcome	Explicit regulation of behaviour, enforced by rewards and sanctions

**Figure 4.8: Classification and framing of approaches to conflict resolution in schools**

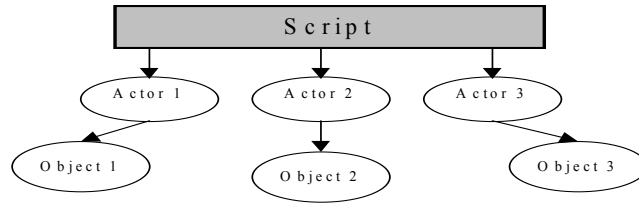
The principles of power and control underpinning arbitration are strong classification and framing. There is a clear division of labour between teachers and pupils. Teachers assume responsibility for adjudicating conflicts, which may include the administration of punishment. The discourse is explicitly controlled by adults with little opportunity for pupil voice. The orientation of the approach views conflict as unwanted and disruptive. Hence, it is deterred and reprimanded by strict rules and sanctions. In contrast, the principles of power and control underpinning peer mediation are weaker classification and framing. Pupils assume a far greater role in generating mutually satisfying outcomes to their conflict. The approach recognises that for a meaningful and lasting resolution to occur, all the parties concerned need to be involved in some form of analysis of the problem and how harmony can subsequently be restored (Cohen 1995).

Bernstein's (2000) language of description shows how different approaches to conflict resolution in schools are underpinned by fundamentally different principles of power and control. The implementation of peer mediation services in schools can be understood as

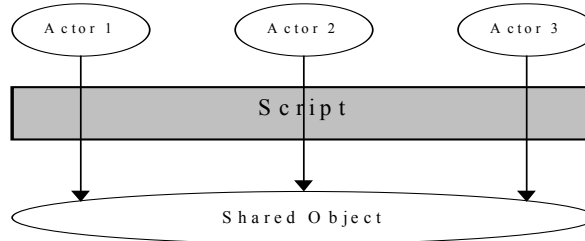
the production of an alternative model of activity with radically different roles and rules to more traditional approaches in schools, such as arbitration. Research can then proceed with sensitivity to how these differences impact upon processes of transformation. Analysis of these processes may be illuminated by Vygotsky's (1987b) distinction between the 'sense' and 'meaning' of cultural artefacts. Meaning refers to the universal value attributed to an artefact and sense refers to the value attributed to an artefact when appropriated within a particular activity. Hence, the production of a new artefact may be subverted by the principles of power and control Bernstein (2000) describes when moved from one activity system to another. For example, 'caring' schools may give an approach like assertive discipline a compassionate edge (Cole et al 2001, Daniels et al 1998). In contrast, teachers at an 'autocratic' school may coerce pupils into attending peer mediation against their will.

Engestrom et al's (1997) models of coordination, cooperation and communication (figure 4.9) may also be useful in understanding how boundaries between actors within an activity system are organised and how their conduct is framed by a script. In the first model, 'coordination', the actors or subjects of an activity system work individualistically in 'scripted' roles. A 'script' sets out both the nature of action and the relationships between actors. In the second model, 'cooperation', actors work individually and according to role but there is a focus on re-conceptualising their own interaction in relation to a shared object. However, Daniels et al (2000) state that reflection is still orientated towards execution of the script rather than its examination.

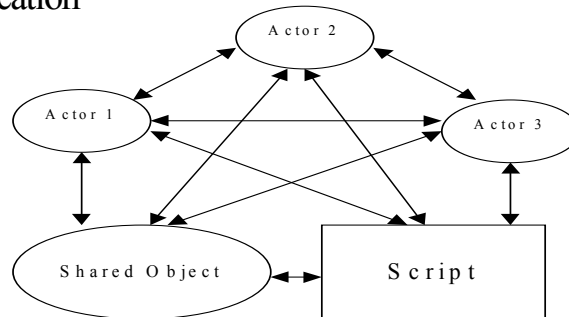
### Coordination



### Cooperation



### Communication



**Figure 4.9: Activity system orchestrations (based on Engestrom et al 1997)**

In the third model, 'communication', actors work in dialogue with each other, a shared object and the script. Communication between these actors is more likely to negotiate and critique relationships, the shared script and object, all of which they are prepared to question and transform. The utility of these three models is they present the opportunity to investigate the impact of peer mediation training on transformation of activity, particularly whether boundaries between teachers and pupils and between pupils are strengthened or weakened as a result of the intervention.

#### **4.6 Summary and critical commentary**

In summary, chapter four has presented the advantages of adopting CHAT (Cole and Engestrom 1993) as a theoretical approach for investigating the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services in schools. Such a topic of research demands an enquiry of how cultural practices in schools may or may not be transformed to produce new psychological possibilities. CHAT was selected over sociocultural theory (e.g. Wertsch 1996, 1998) because the structures of the social world (including language) are incorporated within the analysis rather than a sole emphasis on semiotic mediation. Engestrom's (1998b) 'activity system' models the cultural and individual as constitutive elements of a single unit of analysis. This unit of analysis is extended to depict two interacting systems. In this study, these can represent the activities of conflict resolution in schools and peer mediation training. The theoretical approach was then further elaborated to describe processes of transformation and the production of tools in greater detail. CHAT and the theoretical developments outlined in this chapter are now the subject of further explication and critique.

The concept of cultural activity overcomes many of the problems identified and discussed in chapter three regarding a positivistic approach to investigating the research topic (Ratner 1997). CHAT does not differentiate between cultural activity and psychological phenomena; they are intertwined. Psychological phenomena are the subjective processes of practical cultural activity and cultural activity is the practical realisation of psychological phenomenon (Daniels 2001a). In this relationship, the study of activity may take a prominent role because it creates the conditions from which psychological phenomena emerges. However, Ratner (1997) argues activity is never divorced from psychological phenomena. Adopting CHAT as an approach enables the study of the processes in which changes in practical activity resulting from interventions such as peer mediation may create opportunities for new psychological phenomena (Engestrom 1999a).

In adopting CHAT as a theoretical approach, a significant epistemological shift is taken away from an approach such as applied behaviour analysis, which characterised the initial research design. This transition corresponds with a shift from a mechanistic view of human nature (Overton 1875, 1984, Overton and Reese 1973, 1981) to a dialectical view. The former regards human nature as determined by social structures. Hence, research proceeds by studying the effect of manipulating one variable on another, i.e. the correlation of inputs (e.g. peer mediation training) and outcomes (e.g. levels of bullying). The latter view credits human nature with the capacity to both reproduce and transform social structures. Hence, research includes a study of the processes of development as well as outcomes (Ratner 1997), where interventions create possibilities for action but are interpreted subjectively by individuals.

In some contrast to Ratner (1997), Toomela (2000) argues that a focus on activity as a unit of analysis is insufficient to explain psychological phenomenon. Toomela (2000) states that the study of activity emphasises the unidirectional formation of psychological phenomena by the social relations of cultural activities. Yet, individual development can occur independently of change in activity and the same activities do not correspond to the same psychological functions in different people. Toomela (2000) also states that CHAT belongs to a family of theories that necessitates analysis of all the constituent parts of a system to explain behaviour. The inclusion of all the constituent parts of human systems requires analysis of such phenomena as memory, perception, attention as well as activity (Vygotsky 1978). Toomela (2000) argues that analysis of social relations and psychological phenomenon is no better than the analysis of independent variables.

Instead, Toomela (2000) argues that the study of ‘sign-mediation’, as in the work of Wertsch (1996, 1998), is more appropriate because the process is simultaneously behavioural and psychological and hence combines both properties into a single analytical framework. However, Toomela’s (2000) critique is erroneous on three important points. First, Toomela (2000) overlooks the role the object or motive plays in activity and its analysis (Leontiev 1978). The same activity may be enacted for many

different reasons and hence correspond to different psychological functions. For example, a conflict can be resolved by negotiation for many different motives; because of one's values, to satisfy self-interest, to please another and so on. In each case, motive explains quite different psychological processes even though the same external activity may be observed.

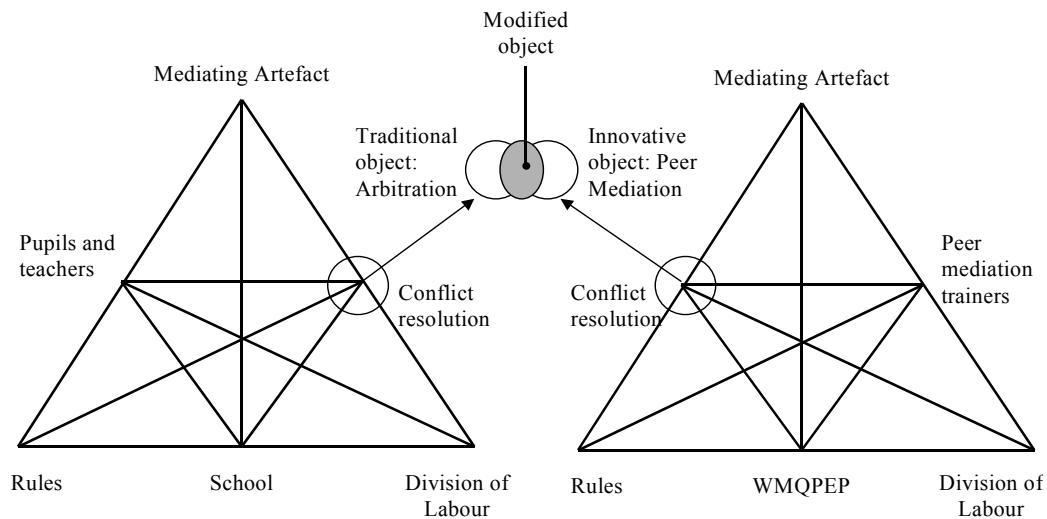
Second, a study of activity does not emphasise a unidirectional formation of mind. The Vygotskian notions of internalisation and externalisation explain that although tools and artefacts are produced by activity and shape the consciousness of those who use them, using these tools and artefacts also empowers agents with the capability of shaping the practical conditions in which they are located (Daniels 2001a). Third, Star (1996) argues that an emphasis on sign-mediation alone under describes the structure of the social world, which is embedded in the study of language. If context is condensed into sign-mediation, as in Wertsch's mediated action (1998), then conflicts regarding such matters as rules and division of labour would centre upon issues of communication alone rather than accompanying and deeper examination of their material nature. CHAT's emphasis upon the practical conditions in which psychological phenomena are realised is more pertinent to the demands of this study because peer mediation training is not merely at the level of signs but at the level of activity. It aims to introduce a new model of activity for resolving interpersonal conflicts, which may include new rules and social relations as well as mediational signs or tools. Hence, it is highly appropriate to include analysis of the structure of the social world in the approach to research (Tulviste 1999).

CHAT has been developed from a longstanding philosophical tradition, which was outlined in section 4.2. This tradition advocates that the role of philosophy is not to predict or represent society but to transform it (Jensen 1999). The approach of CHAT, as distinct to sociocultural theory and its emphasis on semiotics, has been developed with the transformation of practical activity as both a key explanatory principle for human development and methodology for its study. This is particularly evident in the work of Engestrom (e.g. Engestrom 1999b, 1999c, 2001), who views instability and

contradictions within and between activity systems as major propellants of change and development. Included in the approach, is the analysis of practical conditions and social relations before, during and after intervention. The centrality of the provocation and observation of transformation within CHAT makes it a highly appropriate theoretical selection for a study of the impact of implementing peer mediation services in schools. The methodological implications of CHAT for provoking and studying transformation will be revisited in the design of empirical research in chapter six.

CHAT provides a number of concepts to inform the study of processes of social and individual transformation. One such concept is the culturally produced mediating ‘tool’ or ‘artefact’. The use of culturally produced artefacts shapes consciousness but they are also used to shape culture. Artefacts are both reproduced and modified historically by generation after generation, although they have to be relearned by each (Cole 1996, Tomasello 1999). Engestrom’s (1999a, 1999b, 1999c) theory of expansive learning elucidates the transformation of activity over time. Engestrom (1999a) posits an expansive cycle to depict the relationship between processes of reproduction/internalisation and expansion/externalisation. Expansion involves the production of new cultural artefacts to solve practical problems culminating in the design and implementation of a new model of activity. During these processes, the outcomes of production are fluid. For example, a new artefact may become a new rule or vice versa. The practical application of Engestrom’s theory of expansive learning has clear relevance to the topic of this research. The implementation of peer mediation services in schools can be understood as a relationship between two activity systems, in which the intervention produces an alternative model of activity, as shown in figure 4.10.





**Figure 4.10: The relationship between two models of activity for resolving conflicts in schools**

The third generation of CHAT (Cole and Engestrom 1993) posit two interacting activity systems as a minimal unit of analysis. This represents a critical milestone in the development of this thesis as this unit of analysis can be used to model the relationship between conflict resolution in schools and a peer mediation training provider (WMQPEP). WMQPEP produces an alternative model of activity (peer mediation) to the current model of activity for resolving conflicts (e.g. arbitration). Research can then proceed to study the transformation that may or may not result from implementation of the new model of activity and an examination of the processes involved. Engestrom's (1999a) theory of expansive learning is particularly useful in this regard, providing both a methodology and concepts to investigate these processes. In doing so, the research question is modified from 'what are the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services for interpersonal conflict resolution in schools?' to 'in what ways can CHAT illuminate the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services for interpersonal conflict resolution in schools?' To some extent, an answer to this

question has been initiated in this chapter, which will continue into empirical research design and analysis.

Whereas the production of an outcome, and transformation to a lesser degree, has a rich theoretical account within CHAT, Daniels (2001a, 2001b) argues that the production of the tool does not. In this regard, Bernstein's (2000) theory of cultural transmission is used to show how principles of power and control represented by the base of an activity system produce tools that regulate psychological possibilities. Bernstein's sociological theories of education constitute a wealth of material, particularly regarding the production, distribution and acquisition of discourse, largely untapped by this thesis. However, Bernstein's theories (e.g. Bernstein 1975, 2000) illustrate that alternative models of activity may be underpinned by fundamentally different principles of power and control (e.g. figure 4.8), which may need resolving for peer mediation services to be implemented successfully. Bernstein's (2000) language of description can be used to examine the strength of classification between roles within the division of labour of an activity and the explicitness of how rules are framed. Research can then investigate whether forms of social organisation (e.g. who resolves conflict and how) are transformed by intervention (peer mediation training) and the subsequent impact on the production of tools and opportunities for new ways of thinking and acting.

The model in figure 4.10 is still some way short of the analytical tool needed to commence empirical research and investigate processes of social and individual transformation. Apart from ruptures used to explain the development of the animal into the human activity system (Engestrom 1998b, section 4.2.3) and contradictions between alternative elements or models of activity as components of expansive cycles (Engestrom 1999b, 1999c), there is little description of the specific modality of different forms of conflict that may result in transformation. Bernstein (1981,2000) reminds theorists of the need to refine higher-level concepts. In the same way it is appropriate to refine the concepts subsumed by 'activity', it is also appropriate and may indeed be illuminating, to refine the concept of 'conflict'. Not least because the nature of conflict and its resolution is the phenomenon peer mediation aims to transform and is the central topic of this research. In chapter five, Engestrom's

(1998b, 1999b) levels of contradictions are developed to model four types of conflict, including those between alternative models of activity. These are placed onto a time framework to represent school-based interventions and how conflict between these alternative models may be resolved to transform institutional and interactional practices.

## **CHAPTER 5: A CULTURAL-HISTORICAL ACTIVITY THEORY MODEL OF CONFLICT**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Chapter four argued that the minimal unit of analysis for activity theorists is two interacting activity systems (Cole and Engestrom 1993). These can be used to represent the production of an alternative model of activity for conflict resolution in schools by a peer mediation training provider. Bernstein's (2000) theory of cultural transmission was incorporated into the theoretical approach to show how peer mediation and approaches to conflict resolution in schools such as arbitration are underpinned by fundamentally different principles of power and control, which may cause conflict that in turn may result in social and individual transformation. The purpose of this chapter is to take the concept of 'conflict' and model its various types on the activity system. The utility of this endeavour is it provides a single analytical framework and language of description for investigating conflicts that may occur at an institutional level of analysis whilst peer mediation is being implemented and the subsequent impact upon conflict and conflict resolution at an interactional level of analysis.

Greater conceptual analysis of conflict is achieved by developing Engestrom's (1998b) 'levels of contradictions' into four models of conflict. These are:

- TYPE I: Clash of actions
- TYPE II: Clash of activities
- TYPE III: Clash between actions and the producer of aspects of activity
- TYPE IV: Clash between potential objects

Cumulatively, these four models subsume the various types of conflict identified within the literature and reviewed in section 2.3 of this thesis (e.g. Boulding 1962, Dahrendorf 1959, Galtung 1965, MacGrath 1984, Pondy 1967). Literature and extracts from interviews with teachers are used to illustrate each model. The extracts are derived from a case study abandoned for reasons discussed in the next chapter, where teachers were asked to describe their daily experiences of conflict in school. The models are then placed onto a time framework to depict the phases of conflict (Pondy 1967, Thomas 1976). These phases include the history of a conflict, the conflict itself, its resolution and potential transformation of activity. The end product of this modelling process is a ‘conflict cycle’, which can be used to illuminate processes of social and individual transformation. The empirical chapters of this study investigate how a type IV conflict at the institutional level of analysis between alternative models of activity is or is not resolved to modify cultural practices at the interactional level of analysis, including who resolves conflict and how. The models potentially carry CHAT forward by explicating the specific nature of conflicting social practices.

## **5.2 The development of a ‘conflict cycle’**

### *5.2.1 Conflict*

Pondy’s (1967) has conceptualised conflict within and between organisations and identified three categories, shown below. More recent theorists of each type of conflict theory are shown in brackets.

1. Bargaining: conflict of interests in competition for resources (e.g. Rubin 1994).
2. Bureaucratic: conflicts of power between a superordinate and subordinate parties (e.g. Walker 1988).
3. Systems: conflicts between parties related to functional relationships (e.g. Scherer et al 1975).

The activity system can integrate Pondy's classification of conflicts into a single unit of analysis. Bargaining type conflicts refer to the mutually exclusive outcomes of collective activity. Bureaucratic conflicts refer to the vertical organisation of collective activity, which also incorporates interacting systems that produce elements of the activity under analysis. Systemic conflicts refer to the lateral organisation of collective activity. These conflicts involve a number of other conceptual and behavioural properties. According to Putnam and Poole (1987), these include: actors and their characteristics (e.g. beliefs, skills, values), conflict issues, relationships between actors (trust, power, interdependency), communication and the context, which may include organisational norms and the history of the conflict. The activity system represents a conceptual and analytical framework that integrates these elements, albeit in a highly condensed manner (Davydov 1999a).

Developing the Marxist occupation with contradictions as the sources of change and Bateson's (1972) influential notion of 'double-binds', Engestrom (1998b) constructs four types of contradiction applicable to the activity system. It is important to differentiate between a contradiction and a conflict by being specific about their terminology. A conflict refers to a clash (material or ideal), something actual in opposition. Contradictions refer to historically accumulating structural tensions within and between activity systems. Such contradictions may exist within activity systems for some time and may even be reproduced without identification. These latent forces may form the antecedents of a conflict once identified but cannot be described as conflict whilst dormant. However, Engestrom's (1998b) levels of contradictions suggest the potential points of tension that may result in conflict. Engestrom's (1998b) four levels of contradiction are:

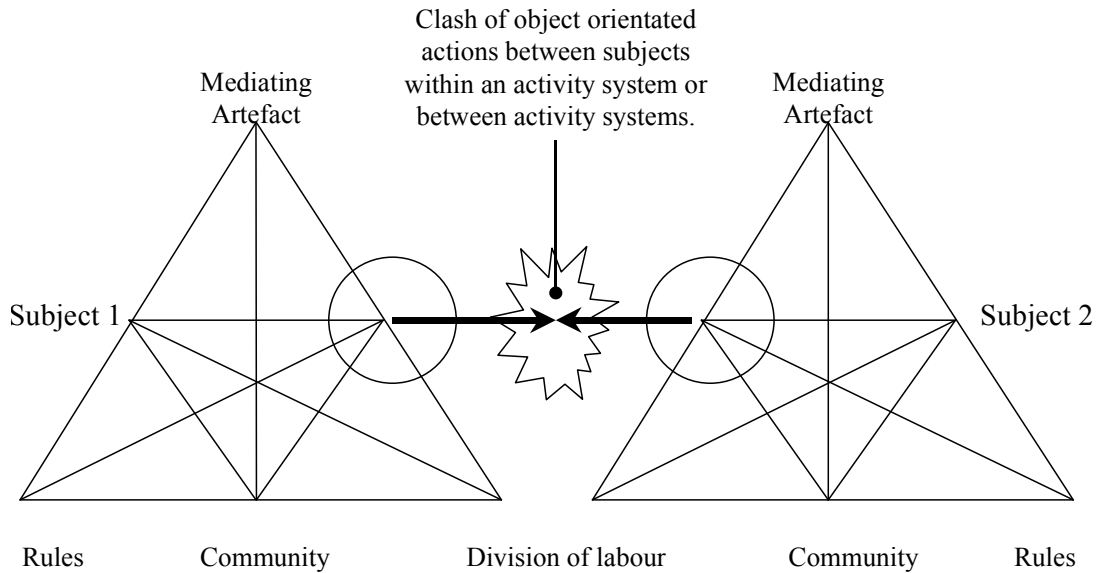
- Level 1: Primary inner contradictions between aspects of the activity system and interacting activity, which produces them.
- Level 2: Secondary contradictions between constituents of the activity system.

- Level 3: Contradictions within the horizon of possible actions, which form the collective object, particularly between more advanced proposed action and dominant patterns of action.
- Level 4: Quaternary contradictions between the activity system and interacting systems.

These levels of contradictions subsume Dahrendorf's (1959) classification of conflict theories by social units and also bear striking similarity to Galtung's (1965) types of conflicts (refer back to figure 2.1), which affect 'action-systems', the term he uses to conceptualise institutions. However, his subsequent treatment of conflict and the institution follows a mechanistic tradition by employing a sole focus on principles of bargaining, which is of limited utility to the demands of this study, as critiqued in section 2.3.6a. Whereas Engestrom's (1998b) contradictions are not conflicts, they suggest the type of activity, which may result in different conflicts. These are between the object-orientated actions of subjects within an activity system or between activity systems, between actions and components of an activity system and between potential objects. Each of these types of conflict is modelled and discussed in the following sub-sections.

### *5.2.2 Type I and II conflicts: Clash of object orientated actions/activities*

Boulding (1962) and Galtung (1965) are amongst a number of conflict theorists who view conflict in relation to interacting systems. Such a type of conflict can be represented by a clash of object-orientated-actions/activities between subjects or activity systems, as depicted in figure 5.1.



**Figure 5.1: Type I and II conflict/clash of object orientated actions or outcomes**

Figure 5.1 shows a conflict between two interacting activity systems, which can be used to represent all types of behavioural-interactional conflicts. It is important to clarify the elements of each system before further elaboration. The subjects involved in such a clash could be individuals, dyads, or groups from the same or different activity systems depending on how the subject and community are defined (Daniels et al 2000). A clash of object-orientated actions refers to conflicts between the actions of subjects (type I conflict). These subjects may be horizontally or vertically related to each other within the same activity system or they could be subjects enacting conflicts across boundaries. A clash between activities (type II conflict) refers to a macro level of conflict concerning opposition between the outcomes of two or more activity systems. This type of conflict can be used to depict a variety of conflicts resulting in antagonism at micro or macro levels of analysis, including conflicts of interests (Deutsch 1973), aggression caused by goal frustration (Lewin et al 1944), bargaining type conflicts (Pondy 1967) or ideological disputes (Wright 1951). Whereas CHAT posits that any action or activity is



simultaneously conceptual and behavioural, these types of conflict refer to clashes involving direct confrontation. In schools, these may include physical and verbal assaults between pupils, and between pupils and teachers.

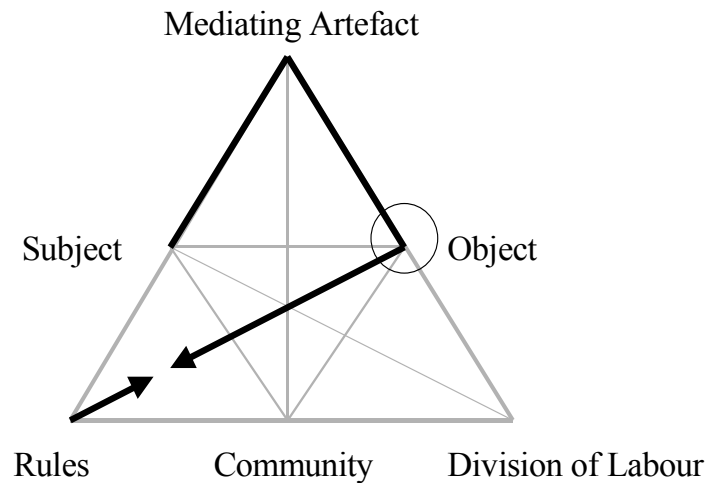
Depending on how the subject is defined, type I/II conflicts are characteristic of both Engestrom's (1998b) Level 2 and 4 contradictions, regarding contradictions between constituents of the activity system and collective activity systems respectively. They may also relate to Level 1 contradictions, if the conflicting party is an activity system responsible for producing or an element of the activity system under analysis. However, this latter type of conflict is given greater distinction and description in the next section.

### *5.2.3 Type III conflicts: Clash of object orientated actions and components of the activity system*

Conflict does not just exist between the outcomes of actions and activity; it can exist within an activity system. Dahrendorf's (1959) classification of conflict includes power dynamics. Conflicts may occur between parties who are equal, between superordinate and subordinate parties and between the whole and parts of a system. This last type of conflict can be represented as the action of a subject (individual or sub-group of the activity system) being in conflict with an element of the activity system, such as its inherent rules, community and division of labour. Three different types of behavioural-structural conflicts are depicted in figures 5.2a-c. An interacting system is involved if it produces the element of activity under analysis.

Representing the specific nature of conflict acknowledges the role of social structures in producing conflict, central to the theories of Marx (Kamenka 1983), Lewin et al (1944), Dahrendorf (1959) and many others. Figures 5.2a-c are particularly useful in representing bureaucratic-structural conflicts (e.g. Quinney 1970, Willis 1977, Bourdieu & Passeron 2000). According to Easterbrook et al (1992), the surface of bureaucratic systems,

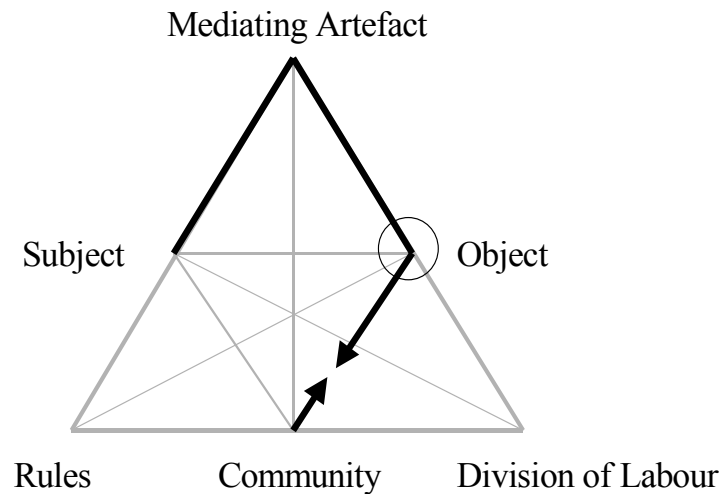
typically that of liberal-democratic institutions is one of stability and cohesion. However, those who voluntarily or involuntarily contest elements of a system's structure, including its rules and social relations may find themselves in conflict with the entire weight of the system.



**Figure 5.2a: Type IIIa conflict/object orientated action - rules clash**

All systems have means of enforcing their rules. Schools use various rewards and sanctions to coerce compliance (Moss 1998). For example, if a pupil at an English school commits a serious breach of these rules as depicted in figure 5.2a, they may be permanently excluded from that school (Cole, Visser & Upton 1998, Hayden 1997, Sellman et al 2002, Slee, Weiner & Tomlinson 1998), subject to a 'legal' appeal (Harris, Eden and Blair 2000). The Social Exclusion Unit (1998), drawing upon a range of published research findings, cited violence (physical or verbal) as the most common reason for permanent exclusion, followed by disruption, other misconduct and towards the end of the list, drugs. All of these 'offences' can be seen as breaches of the system's

rules. Disciplinary functions in schools are enforced primarily by teachers, supported and empowered by local and national administrative/governmental institutions. Ultimately, these are interacting systems that produce and regulate elements of activity in schools. Thus, conflicts between subjects and elements of the structure of their schools pits individuals against the power of interconnected and legitimised systems of activity (Easterbrook et al 1992, Slee 1995).



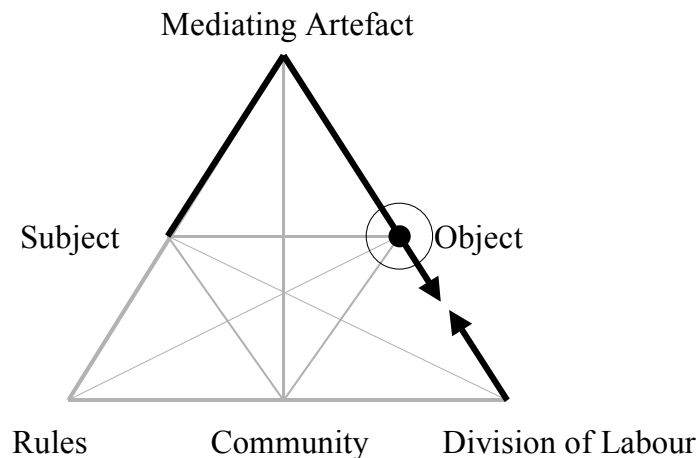
**Figure 5.2b: Type IIIb conflict/object orientated action - community clash**

Figure 5.2b depicts a type of conflict that exists when a subject's object-orientated actions are in opposition to the community of an activity system, anti-social behaviour being one example. In a group interview with teachers who were asked to describe the teacher-pupil conflicts they experienced in a typical day, causation was located by one teacher as a product of the dissonance between home and school communities. This teacher, reflecting on talking to a parent about their child's aggressive behaviour in school commented:

“We’re actually highlighting faults and failures they’ve got themselves as parents and the children have got in socialising and learning at school and we’re actually just constantly saying this is not acceptable because there are a certain set of rules that we have to abide by at school...they don’t live by our rules...it may well be that the child’s community actually condones violence as the means of solving a problem”.

(Year 6 teacher)

This teacher describes a pupil who operates within two distinct communities, characterised by contesting rules, norms and ways of being. Thus, when the pupil applies the conventional means of solving a problem from one context to another they sometimes place themselves in conflict. Modelling such a contradiction/conflict links at least two interacting activity systems, which will be given greater elucidation in section 5.2.5.



**Figure 5.2c: Type IIIc conflict/object orientated action - division of labour clash**

Figure 5.2c depicts a conflict between a subject’s object orientated actions and the division of labour within the system, such as when a clash of roles occurs (Calderwood 1989). In capitalist societies, interacting activity systems may produce new tools or

impose new rules that have implications for the organisation of labour of certain forms of activity (Engestrom 1999a). In schools, Bernstein's (1981, 2000) theory of cultural transmission suggests pedagogic and communicative practice; teacher-student relationships and curriculum selection, sequencing, pacing and assessment represent a complex division of labour. Since the Education Act of 1988, the control of cultural transmission in English schools has become more centralised, sometimes provoking conflicts between teachers and imposed practice, as this Headteacher recounts:

“Its what's imposed on you from the Department of Education opposed to what we feel we should be doing...which then creates dilemmas in the classroom, where you've got a child who is being disruptive and the teacher has a conflict about what to do...you can't deal with the situation and teach at the same time”.

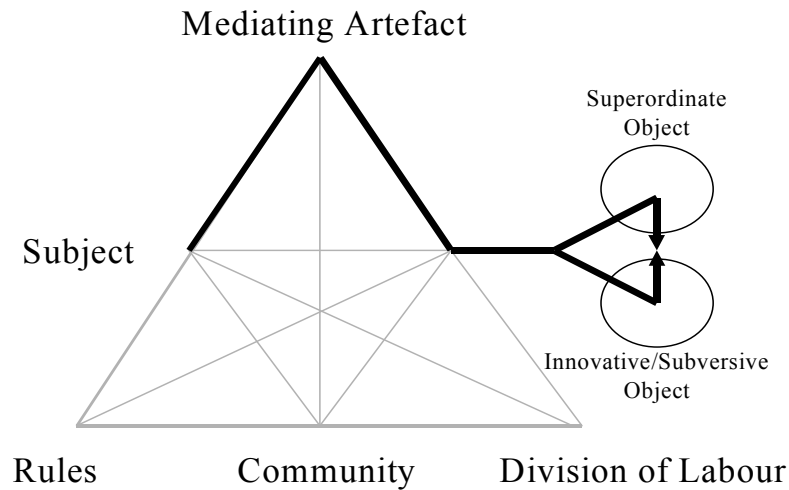
(Primary school headteacher)

Type III conflicts are potentially useful in depicting a variety of conflicts (e.g. pupil-teacher conflicts) that may be transformed by intervention. They are also useful in representing conflicts teachers may have with elements of activity and changes to the structure of activity in schools produced by interventions such as peer mediation. Although type III conflicts most closely resembles Engestrom's (1998b) Level 2 contradictions between constituents of the activity system, if these aspects are produced by an interacting activity system then they are more characteristic of a Level 1 contradiction. It is possible that a number of type III conflicts (and others for that matter) may occur simultaneously.

#### *5.2.4 Type IV conflicts: Clash of potential object orientated actions*

Type IV conflicts are those between the potential goals or object orientated actions of a subject or activity system. These can be defined as conceptual conflicts. On an individual level these may be orientated to multiple actions within a task or role, such as conflict caused by generating, planning, executing and performing solutions to problems (MacGrath 1984) or responding to anomalous data in cognitive and learning theories

(Chinn and Brewer 1993, Desforges 1995). On a collective level, a type IV conflict may be between a traditional/superordinate object and an innovative/subversive object as shown in figure 5.3 and introduced in the previous chapter regarding expansive cycles. If the subject is an individual, one activity system may be sufficient to represent this type of conflict. If the subject is a group, the innovative object may be produced by an interacting system.



**Figure 5.3: Type IV conflict/clash of traditional and innovative objects**

Problem solving within an activity system may produce internally generated alternatives, which challenge the superordinate/traditional object and orientation to it. In capitalist societies, the innovative/subversive object is frequently produced by an interacting system. This is commonly a technological advancement, which presents a more efficient alternative to the current elements of an activity system (Engestrom 1999a). As a new object, whether internally or externally generated, is incorporated into the system it may over time become a new tool or rule of the existing system.

Whereas behavioural conflicts may often be destructive, this source of conflict may more frequently be constructive. For example, innovation may result in modifications to cultural artefacts, as suggested by Tomasello's (1999) ratchet effect in the preceding chapter. It may also illuminate new conceptual possibilities as Bruner (1986) describes in relation to the role of an artist; 'the artist creates possible worlds through the metaphoric transformation of the ordinary and the conventionally "given"' (Bruner 1986, p. 49). It is worth giving brief illustrations of this type of conflict at a) the individual level of goals, and b) the group level of objects.

*a) Alternative goals:*

A notion of conflict as the frustration of a single object orientated action fails to explain an abundance of examples of contrary experiences (Sillince 1993). It places conflict at a junction only, when a goal/outcome is either fulfilled or denied. It does not acknowledge that conflict can be part of a process, such as the consideration of a number of courses of action. Consider an example from Wertsch (1998), which describes a pupil's potential responses to a teacher's question. The pupil wants to answer the question correctly and please the teacher but s/he also wants peer approval, which will be affected by co-operating with the teacher. To resolve this conflict, the pupil changes the way they use the mediating artefact of language. S/he decides to answer correctly but cheekily, thus fulfilling both goals. This type of conflict is characterised by a dilemma, or cognitive dissonance (Aronson 1999). Regarding interactional conflicts, such an approach is characterised by an exploration of alternative courses of action, in place of or at least before direct confrontation.

*b) Alternative objects:*

A school may also experience conflict when innovative and traditional objects clash. Whereas the source of this conflict can be internally generated, a common source is often externally generated. For example a number of recent educational initiatives in the UK, including the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have attempted to regulate not only what is taught in schools but how. Undoubtedly, this will have caused and continue

to cause conflict between established and imposed practices. In such cases, the innovative object has been produced and rendered obligatory by powerful and interconnected systems of activity.

The modelling process of the four types of conflict so far outlined presents two advantages. First, it specifies the nature and structure of conflict between an intervention and activity in schools, as represented by a type IV conflict. Second, it is now possible to relate the resolution of a type IV conflict between alternative models of activity at an institutional level of analysis to outcomes regarding the nature and structure of conflicts at the interactional level using the same language of description. It is theoretically and empirically exciting to examine whether the implementation of peer mediation services in schools results in any changes in the types of conflict experienced by individuals. Whereas conflict types I-III are characterised by some form of direct antagonism, a type IV conflict is characterised by a consideration of alternative courses of action. The former frequently results in win-lose outcomes (Katz and Lawyer 1993), yet the latter involves deliberation between various potential resolutions including win-win outcomes. Hence, it will be interesting to examine whether intervention results in a greater frequency of type IV conflicts in place of others.

#### *5.2.5 The role of mediating artefacts in positioning conflicting parties*

Wertsch (1998) describes a number of conflicts as issues of mediated action. Whereas, it is difficult to perceive of a subject being in conflict with an artefact used to mediate the world, how a tool is used can position a subject against another or impede performance of a task orientated towards an object. Therefore, a clash of object-orientated actions may exist primarily as a result of the type of mediating artefact used or how the artefact is used (Holland and Lave 2001). Individuals who take the place of the subject in an activity system do so with the voice of their community (Engestrom 1999b). This 'voice' may position the subject against others. Bakhtin (Bakhtin 1981, see also Cazden 1993 and Wertsch 1991) refers to this process as ventriloquism:



The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intentions, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not after all out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's concrete contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own.

Bakhtin (1981, pp. 293-294).

If the language in Bakhtin's (1981) example is heavily laden with historical meaning produced by others, then it may position a subject in relation to conflict issues (e.g. Cooper & Upton 1990). For example, whether a subject refers to Northern Ireland as 'the north' or 'a province' immediately positions themselves against others with different points of view (Cunningham 1998). In light of the manner in which certain types of language use can position parties in conflict, it is not surprising that a number of theorists (e.g. Putnam & Poole 1987, Azar 1986, Pace 1990) describe communicational aspects of conflict as both central to the issues of conflict and its resolution.

The mediating artefact employed may also reveal a position of class or level of education, which privileges or prejudices judgements made about them (Wertsch 1998). Holland and Lave (2001) have compiled an edited volume of papers, united by the following assertion: macro scale conflicts/struggles are embedded/mediated through the contentious, everyday social practices of individuals, which then impacts on the dialogical construction of their identities. Holland and Lave (2001) argue 'history in person' and 'history in institutions' come into regular conflict. With some similarities, Bernstein (1981), Bourdieu (1991), Bourdieu & Passeron (1977), Quinney (1970) and Wertsch (1998) argue that such systems as education produce principles of communication that differentially regulate access by different groups and ultimately their acquisition of the benefits of full participation in that system.

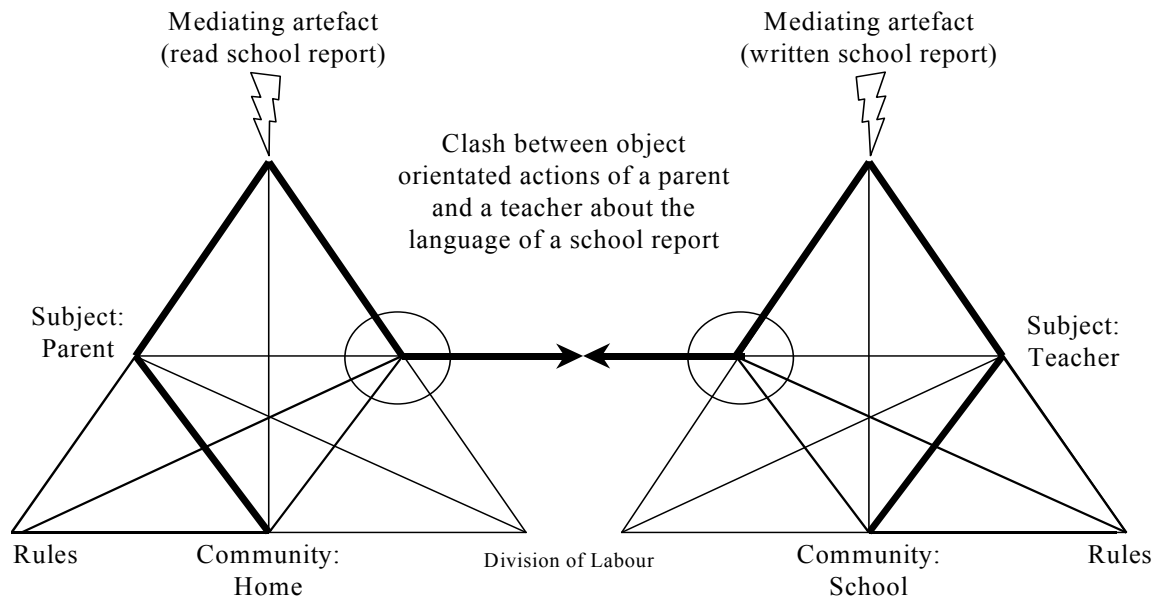
As an illustration of the role mediating artefacts play in conflict, consider these comments from a teacher, who within a group interview about conflicts in school described a

discussion with a parent that involved issues regarding the production and structure of mediating artefacts:

“Last week, when we were talking to a parent, she made the point that whenever she spoke to anyone from the school or the local authority or whenever she received paperwork, they always spoke or it was always written in language she couldn’t understand. And what she was really saying, was I suppose, I don’t like the term, but if you say you’ve got a middle class value because you’re using a high level language in your writing and speech - for a lot of these parents that’s a conflict because that puts you, in their eyes above them and they think then that you’re talking down to them. This parent was so concerned, she said is it possible that when I get this report that it’s written in language that I can read.”

(Year 6 teacher)

Hedegaard et al (1999) describe a similar conflict between parents’ expectations and social practices in schools. These types of conflict can be depicted as a verbal confrontation (type I conflict), as depicted in figure 5.4.



**Figure 5.4: Clash of object orientated actions positioned by a subject’s use of a mediating artefact**

The conflict shown in figure 5.4 suggests that the mediational artefact, which is both the matter of dispute and also present in the communication between the teacher and the parent, is embedded with power relations (Bourdieu 1991). The forks depicted on each activity system indicate that the mediational artefacts linking the two systems (teacher-parent dialogue and the school report itself) are laden with symbolic power. The language in which the report is written is inaccessible to the parent. The content of the language suggests each subject operates within different levels of discourse. Thus, when the two meet, the teacher operates within an educational discourse and positions him/her-self in conflict with the parent, who is operating within a less formal discourse and subsequently, perceives the matter as an issue of power.

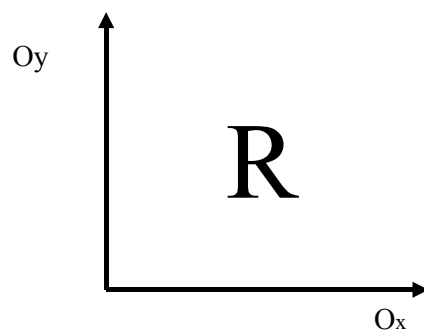
This example illustrates Bernstein's (2000) argument that principles of power and control produce forms of communication that regulate opportunities for thinking and acting. Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) and Salisbury and Jackson (1996) have criticised schools that translate exclusive, competitive and autocratic school values into discourses that reproduce controlling and violent approaches to conflict. In contrast, Daniels et al (1998) argue that creating and maintaining positive school environments involves the translation of power into an ethos, which generally promotes equality and inclusion. In light of these points, the type of discourse produced by peer mediation and its underpinning principles of power and control may come into conflict with more authoritative discourses in schools. This may be an important factor in explaining why such interventions sometimes fail or are not sustained. Alternatively, incorporating peer mediation into the management of social relations in schools may have an impact on the types of tools produced to regulate thinking and acting in new ways.

### **5.3 Conflict resolution**

Section 5.2 has modelled four different types of conflict using the activity system as a common unit of analysis. Yet, to adequately model social phenomena such as conflict it has to be understood in terms of its continuing historical development (Giddens 1979).

The writer's next step in developing an activity theory model of conflict is to consider how conflicts are resolved. In this regard, dual concerns theory (Johnson & Johnson 1997) is revisited.

Dual concerns theory (Johnson & Johnson 1997) posits that approaches to conflict and its resolution are informed by deliberation between goals and relationships. These dual concerns relate well to CHAT's concepts of objects and subjects. Translation into the language of CHAT suggests conflict resolution is a matter of processing concerns for different objects (figure 5.5). The relative importance of one over another will inform the conflict resolution strategy selected (as discussed in section 2.3.6). Object is a broad term and is simultaneously ideal and material. On one hand it can be used to represent concern for a goal or idea ( $O_x$ ). On another hand it can be used to represent a contesting goal/idea or another subject ( $O_y$ ). When interest orientation to both objects is high, the approach to conflict is likely to involve dissonance between the two and the selection of an appropriate behaviour. The behaviour adopted by other subjects will determine the intensity of interpersonal conflicts. When concern for one object is higher, the approach to a conflict is likely to favour an approach that preserves this interest.



**Figure 5.5: A model of conflict resolution strategy (R) based upon object interest orientation ( $O_x$ ) and interest for other subjects/objects ( $O_y$ )**

To make sense of any model of conflict resolution, it has to be related to time and context. Otherwise, the model remains an abstraction (Volkemma and Bergmann 1989). It is therefore necessary to incorporate the outcome of conflict resolution and the role history plays within the model. This is initiated by further elaboration in this and subsequent sections. Duals concern theory (Johnson and Johnson 1997) only suggests the approach a subject may adopt in a conflict situation, it does not explain the actual nature of resolution. When this model is synthesised with elements of an activity system and the potential involvement of third parties (Isenhardt and Spangle 2000), the following forms of resolution are possible.

Potential resolutions for proactive approaches (controlling, compromise, collaboration) to conflict:

1. Modify object or object orientation. This could include expansion of the object and/or transformation of relationships with other subjects.
2. Modify the mediating artefact. This could include transformation of language use and/or how it regulates possibilities for thinking and acting.
3. Modify contradictions inherent in the activity system.

Potential resolutions for non-active approaches to a conflict:

4. Avoid clash of objects.
5. Succumb to the dominant object.

When a conflict is difficult to resolve:

6. Conflict maintenance or intensification.
7. Use of third parties to arbitrate or mediate the conflict and impose or facilitate a resolution.
8. Conflict remains unresolved.

Some of these approaches to conflict and its resolution may then result in considerable transformation of activity as an outcome, the topic of the next section.

#### 5.4 Conflict and the transformation of activity

When activity theorists such as Engestrom (1998b) refer to ruptures in activity, they are referring to fundamental changes in the material nature of activity, which in turn creates new psychological opportunities. The source of many of these changes may be contradictions or conflicts within or between aspects of one or more activity systems, which have been resolved then re-internalised to reshape that system. A number of theorists (e.g. Tomasello 1999) have proposed that it is human beings' abilities to use and modify cultural artefacts, particularly tertiary artefacts (Wartofsky 1973), which allow humans to project alternative views of the outcomes of their action, and thus empower potential changes in activity (Bruner 1986). Ontogenetically, by affecting development people then develop in different ways and subsequently further affect development in a perpetual cyclical motion (Wertsch 1991). The properties of activity always have a particular past and are always in the process of undergoing further change. This is the premise of Vygotsky's (1981a) genetic law of cultural development. Vygotsky (1981a) states,

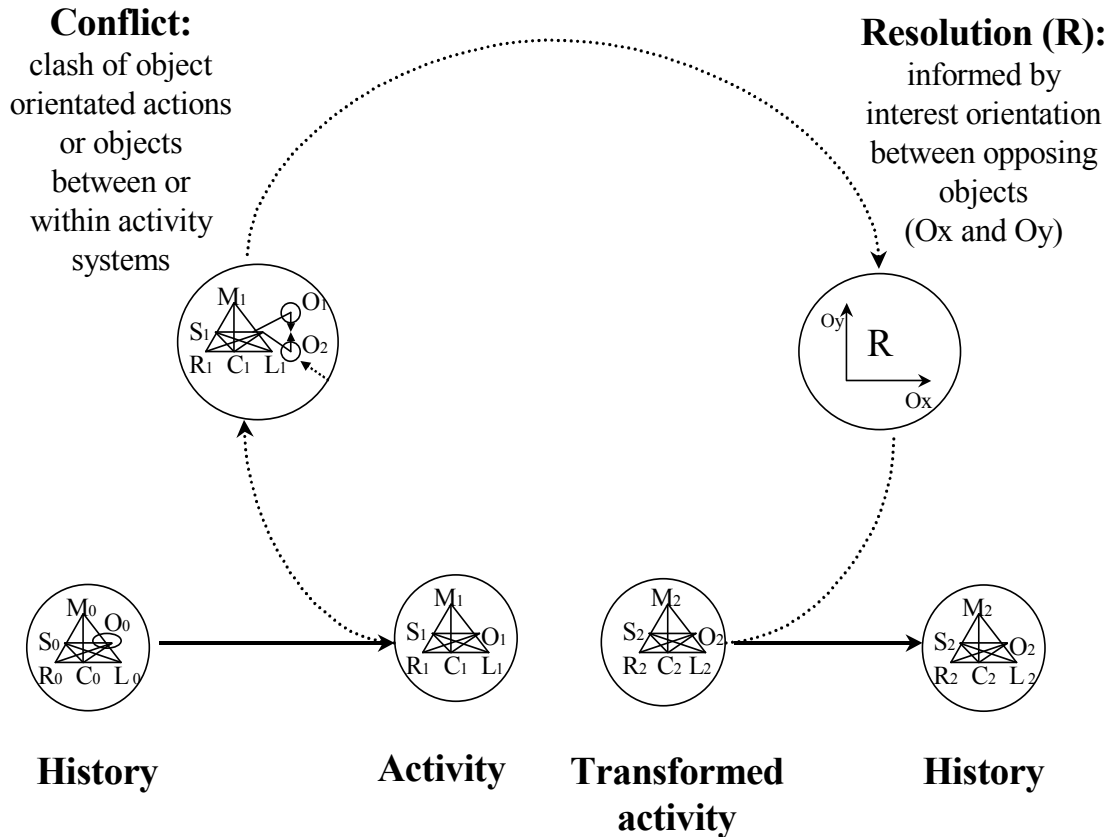
by being included in the process of behaviour, the psychological tool alters the entire flow and structure of mental functions. It does this by determining the structure of a new instrumental act, just as a technical tool alters the process of a natural adaptation by determining the form of labour operations.  
(Vygotsky 1981a, p.137).

The approach of first generation activity theorists (e.g. Vygotsky 1978) was underpinned by a notion of continuing human evolution towards the realisation of ever-higher mental processes. Third generation activity theorists (e.g. Cole and Engestrom 1993, Valsiner and Cairns 1992) have concentrated their analyses on cyclical accounts of development, in which human activity is normally reproduced but contradictions and conflicts may result in transformation. Conflict occupies a central place within the philosophical traditions of CHAT in explaining the transformation of human activity systems (Jensen 1999). Although minor conflicts and those that are avoided may be resolved with little change, many conflicts require radical re-orchestration of an activity system. Azar (1986) states that endemic conflicts can contain considerable judicial, economic and

technological disparities, resolution of which requires major transformation. Little is known empirically about how activity systems change (Davydov 1999a, 1999b) and understanding such transformation remains one of the contemporary research endeavours of CHAT and of this thesis.

### **5.5 An activity theory model of conflict**

The previous sections of this chapter have presented four types of conflict and an account of how conflict can be resolved to result in social and individual transformation. Together, these form an activity theory model of conflict, when placed onto a time framework. In Giddens's structuration theory, a time element was a crucial aspect of meaningful understanding of action (Cassell 1993). This is certainly the case with conflict, which has developmental sequences (Robbins 1974, Thomas 1976, Cohen 1995). These commonly describe periods of latency, perception of conflict, felt conflict, manifestation of conflict and an aftermath. By incorporating the activity system and its potential representations of conflicts into a developmental framework, which includes the history or antecedents of a conflict, the conflict issues, how the conflict is resolved and the potential transformation of an activity system, a comprehensive model of conflict can be built. This model, 'a conflict cycle', is shown in figure 5.6.



**Figure 5.6: A conflict cycle**

In many ways, figure 5.6 is a detailed expansive cycle applicable to four types of conflict. A conflict cycle shows that conflict as modelled in figures 5.1-5.4 has a developmental history, which will shape the knowledge, skills and attitudes brought to the situation. Conflict is then resolved by an evaluation of interest orientations to different objects (as shown in figure 5.5 and elaborated). Conflict resolution may result in the transformation of elements of the activity system, which then become the antecedents of future activity and inevitably over time, conflict.

Descriptions of three different conflict cycles follow to illustrate the model. The first will illustrate a clash of potential object orientations. The second will illustrate a clash of actions and the third will illustrate a clash between a traditional and an innovative object



produced by an interacting activity system. In doing so, the utility of the model to represent conflicts at the levels of operations, actions and activity (Leontiev 1978) is demonstrated. These examples subsume different types of conflict; the third potentially subsumes them all.

*a) Clash of potential object orientations*

At the level of operations, Aronson (1999) has described a process of cognitive dissonance, which can be used as an illustration of a clash of object orientations. Aronson (1999) uses cheating as an example of an activity to explain how conflict between two or more courses of action can result in the modification of future psychological processes. Aronson (1999) presents a moral dilemma between choosing whether or not to cheat in an examination. To cheat would represent one object and not to cheat would represent another (as in figure 5.3) subsumed by the model depicted in figure 5.6. In this example, views of self and previous experience of examinations are suggested as historical antecedents, which inform the conflict situation. The subject could be struggling between the opposing stances ‘I am a good person’ versus ‘cheating is wrong’ and ‘I need to do well in this exam’ versus ‘exams are not that important’. Aronson (1999) then goes on to suggest the form of resolution taken will affect the subject’s future psychological disposition towards cheats and cheating. If the person decides not to cheat, they may become a harsher judge of cheats and cheating in future to help justify their own resistance to such a moral dilemma. If they did cheat however, they may well reduce their experience of cognitive dissonance by taking a more lenient view of cheats and cheating in the future. Thus, in this case, the resolution of conflict re-shapes future psychological operations and activity. Although this illustration could be represented by a type III conflict (between the object orientated actions of a subject and the rules of an activity system) the opposition is enacted inside the head. The conceptual nature of this conflict allies this experience with a type IV conflict between alternative courses of action. A similar dilemma may occur as the result of an interactional conflict, where alternative responses to opposition (e.g. talk, fight, run away etc) are considered. In contrast to other types of conflict, this is more likely to be ‘constructive’ as win-win outcomes are

included in the deliberation between a range of possible resolutions, rather than the single win-lose outcome common to direct confrontation (Katz and Lawyer 1993).

*b) Clash of actions*

A clash of actions is perhaps the easiest conflict to depict. Lewin et al's (1944) frustration-aggression theory suggests all conflict has its root causes in the frustration of an individual's or group's goal. Consider two subjects want the same object, an orange. This would be represented by a type I clash of actions (figure 5.1) subsumed by the conflict model shown in figure 5.6. A number of historical antecedents may contribute to the conflict. These could include power relations (e.g. teacher versus pupil, pupil versus peer) and previous experiences (e.g. friends or adversaries). Bourdieu (Connolly 1998) has suggested a subject's habitus equips each person with a repertoire of strategies. How objects have been achieved in the past (e.g. violently or non-violently) may inform how this object is approached and the conflict resolved. For example, one subject could take the orange by force or both could compromise and agree to share. The resolution is likely to affect future relationships and depending on the power relations between subjects, may have future ramifications. Interestingly, using force may intensify the conflict and provoke further conflict cycles.

*c) Clash of traditional and innovative objects*

This type of conflict bears similarity to an expansive cycle (Engstrom 1999a, 1999b), discussed previously. As an example, consider a school that has a behaviour policy in place, which sets out the protocols for dealing with disturbance in class. Consider then, a visitor from the Local Education Authority (LEA) or the Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) inspects the school and recommends a different approach. This type of potential conflict could be represented as a clash between a traditional object (the way things are done) and an innovative object (an alternative way of doing things). Each will have a historical background and development. Teachers at the school may have

developed the traditional object over a number of years in response to various problems. The innovative object may have been developed by researchers, which the visitor is aware of. How this potential conflict is resolved (preserve traditional object/modify traditional object/internalise innovative object) may or may not transform the activity system. This type of conflict cycle may be particularly useful in illuminating the processes and outcomes involved in the production of an alternative model of activity for conflict resolution in schools by a peer mediation training provider.

## **5.6 Summary and critical commentary**

Chapter five has used the activity system as a unit of analysis upon which to model four types of conflict. Type I/II conflicts can be defined as behavioural-interactional conflicts, type III can be defined as a behavioural-structural conflict and type IV as a conceptual conflict. These were derived from Engestrom's (1998b, 1999a) empirical emphasis on contradictions as the 'motive force of change and development' (Engestrom 1999a, p. 9). A distinction was drawn between contradictions and conflicts. Contradictions refer to matters of inconsistency that are sometimes latent, whereas conflict refers to matters that are in actual opposition. These were then placed onto a time framework (a 'conflict cycle') showing how conflict resolution may result in the transformation of activity. Engestrom (1999a) sees transformation within and between activity systems as a crucial part of human evolution; it is not only the individual but also the environment that is modified through activity.

This modelling process suggests that although conflict is a concept frequently used generically it can also be applied at more specific levels of analysis in quite different ways. The utility of this process is that it provides a single analytical framework and language of description for investigating processes of social and individual transformation, as advocated by Fink (1968) regarding conflict theory and Bernstein (2000) regarding social theory in general. The models of conflict developed by this chapter potentially carry CHAT forward by explicating the specific structure of conflict,

particularly the nature of conflicting social practices that may result in transformation, areas of under theorisation within CHAT according to Daniels (2001a) and Davydov (1999a).

The table in figure 5.7 shows different empirical illustrations of each type of conflict affecting schools. These are organised into two columns: the subject defined as an individual and as a group.

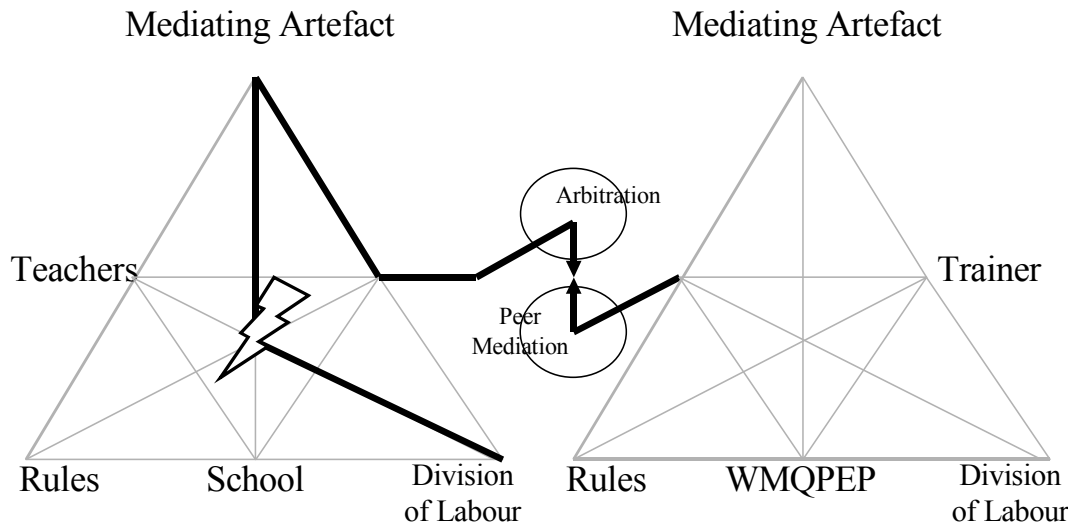
<b>Conflict</b>	<b>Subject=Individual</b>	<b>Subject=Group</b>
Type I/II	Inter-pupil conflict (confrontation between two pupils)	Inter-system conflict (school versus another institution, e.g. family, church)
Type III	Subject-system conflict (confrontation between pupil and teacher/school)	Subject-system conflict (school versus superordinate institution, e.g. LEA)
Type IV	Orientation to alternative objects (deliberation between courses of action, e.g. fight or make friends)	Innovative versus traditional object (intervention versus school)

**Figure 5.7: Illustration of conflict types with empirical examples**

If the subject of an activity system is defined as an individual, a type I conflict can be characterised by inter-pupil conflict. A type III conflict can be characterised by a confrontation between a pupil and an aspect of the activity system, such as the rules of the school, and a type IV conflict by orientation to alternative objects, such as deliberating whether to fight or make friends. If the subject is defined as a group or system such as a school, a type II conflict can be characterised as confrontation between institutions, for example the school and the family. Type III conflict can be characterised as opposition between a school and a superordinate organisation such as the LEA. A type IV conflict represents opposition between alternative objects, one of which may be produced by an interacting activity system.

Greater distinction between these types of conflict can be given by clarifying the nature of the object that opposes action or activity. In a type I/II conflict, the object of opposition is another person or system. In a type III conflict, the object of opposition is an element of a more dominant activity and in a type IV conflict; the object is a 'problem'. This latter conflict is distinct from the others because issues of conflict are re-conceptualised as alternative objects. It is a conflict largely enacted inside the head. The challenge to such models is the incessant and dynamic nature of activity (Hedegaard 2001). In real life, a conflict may proceed from one type to another with rapid succession. For example, a pupil may deliberate between whether to set a fire alarm off or not (type IV conflict), does so, resulting in a reprimand from a teacher (type III), followed by a direct confrontation (type I) resulting in the pupil being made aware that the fire brigade have been called out needlessly, which triggers feelings of guilt between what s/he did and should have done (type IV again).

Empirically, it may be difficult to observe interpersonal conflicts with this level of detail. However, interviews may be conducted with teachers and pupils to ascertain their experiences of conflict since intervention. More practically, a type IV conflict can be used to depict and investigate the relationship between traditional and innovative objects (figure 5.8). In this conflict, the traditional object represents the current model of activity for resolving interpersonal conflicts in school (e.g. arbitration), referred to as the 'traditional activity' from this point on in the text. The innovative object represents an alternative model of activity (peer mediation), referred to as the 'innovative activity' from this point on in the text.



**Figure 5.8: A type IV conflict between the intervention and an approach to conflict resolution in schools**

Arbitration and peer mediation are underpinned by contrasting principles of power and control (Cohen 1995, Griffith 1996). Peer mediation grants pupils greater responsibilities and hence may conflict with the division of labour of the traditional activity, as shown in figure 5.8. The conflict between these two alternative models of activity over time, as represented by a conflict cycle (figure 5.6) can then become the focus of empirical analysis. How conflicting social practices are resolved may have an impact on whether the innovative activity is implemented and sustained. If the innovative activity is implemented, it may have further impact on who resolves conflict and how, producing opportunities for new ways of thinking and acting, which can be probed during interview.

The processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services in schools is potentially illuminated by the development of these models. First, the study of a type IV conflict between alternative models of activity allows the examination of processes

involved in the transformation of cultural practices in schools, an area under theorised in the literature regarding CHAT (Davydov 1999a) and education (Visser et al 2000). Second, the models allow examination of how social relations are organised in schools and potentially transformed by intervention to produce new forms of interaction and conflict resolution. By adopting such a focus, the thesis concentrates its analysis on two particular levels of conflict. These are i) between innovative and traditional objects at the macro-institutional level, and ii) conflict resolution between subjects at the micro-interactive level resulting from transformation. This approach is well served by the methodology of CHAT, which advocates a key role for intervention in the observation of human development (Engeström 1999a, Jensen 1999) and is outlined in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6: A CULTURAL-HISTORICAL ACTIVITY THEORY APPROACH TO EMPIRICAL RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In chapter three, the merits and limitations of different ways of investigating the research topic were discussed, drawing particular attention to the shortcomings of a positivistic approach (Ratner 1997). Instead, the writer argued the need to select a theoretical approach that could describe and explain processes of transformation in schools. The selection of CHAT to meet these demands has implications for empirical research design and provides concepts to inform the analysis of data. The purpose of this chapter is to outline a CHAT approach to conducting empirical research, which is underpinned by two important tenets. These are research should be undertaken in real settings, which observe human development in process. Scribner (Engestrom 1999a) outlines four integral steps to such an approach: the reconstruction of historical behaviour, observation of rudimentary behaviour and the provocation and observation of new behaviour. The approach allows the study of the deliberate provocation of type IV conflict cycles between alternative models of activity (the traditional model of existing approaches to conflict resolution in school and the innovative model of peer mediation) and the impact of this process upon types of conflict at the interactional level of analysis.

Engestrom (1999a) suggests research is best undertaken by actually entering activity systems undergoing transformation over long periods of time. This presents a number of practical issues to researchers as such an approach requires a significant investment of time and resources. To study transformation at several schools in detail, chapter six presents a two-stage approach to empirical research design. In the first stage, the implementation of peer mediation at one school will be investigated in detail. This approach utilises Engestrom's (1987, 1999b, 1999c) expansive learning approach to research as a means of realising Scribner's four stages of appropriate method. In the



second stage, themes derived from the first stage will be used to inform interviews conducted with teachers at schools that have attempted to establish peer mediation in the past. An advantage of this approach is it allows transformation over extended periods of time to be studied at several schools. Traditional approaches to conflict resolution in schools are underpinned by principles of power and control that may conflict with the innovative activity of peer mediation (Cohen 1995, Griffith 1996, figure 4.8). Therefore, cross-institutional comparison is essential in developing an understanding regarding why peer mediation fails or is not sustained at some schools but not others.

## **6.2 Epistemological tenets of CHAT**

### *6.2.1 Radical methodology*

CHAT represents an approach to research that is distinct from traditional, even more subjective/qualitative methodologies. Positivistic validation of an intervention such as peer mediation typically correlates one measurement with another. In doing so, Ratner (1997) argues that the combination of reductionism, operationalism and quantification are fatal to a cultural understanding of behaviour, i.e. they yield little information regarding why and how interventions either succeed or fail in different contexts. One of the reasons for selecting CHAT is its utility for describing and explaining processes of transformation. In this sense it develops anti-positivistic methodology. Vygotsky (1978) argued that a reductionist approach to science was erroneous, not least because of his proposition that cultural activity and psychological phenomenon are intertwined. This proposition represents a significant ontological tenet of CHAT that has informed the methodological approaches of post-Vygotskian theorists (van der Veer and Valsiner 1991). Central to Vygotsky's work was an approach that denied the strict separation of the individual and the social (Daniels 2001a). Hence, post-Vygotskian theorists argue that human behaviour needs to be studied in relation to its broader social and cultural context, rather than atomistically (Cole 1996). Where positivistic social science imposes a cultural

universalism upon its observation of human phenomena (Ratner 1997), post-Vygotskian approaches take into account agents' abilities to interpret, represent and modify their experiences (Tomasello 1999).

This last point is what distinguishes CHAT from other approaches in the social sciences. What the bipolar positions of objectivism/positivism and subjectivism/anti-positivism neglect, according to Engestrom and Miettinen (1999, p. 3) is 'the concept of activity that transcends the dualism between individual subject and objective social circumstances'. In attempting to resolve the differences between these contrasting epistemologies, many social theorists choose an intermediate approach and acknowledge a continuum between the objective and subjective. Such an approach is unsatisfactory for activity theorists, for whom subjectivity and objectivity are neither on a continuum or co-existent but dialectical. CHAT posits that the material and practical conditions of human activity shape psychological phenomena but these conditions may also be transformed by the realisation of psychological phenomena. As a result, activity theorists investigate the simultaneous processes via which practical activity both shapes and is shaped by psychological phenomena (Davydov 1999a, 1999b, Daniels 2001a). In this endeavour, CHAT contains two epistemological tenets highly relevant for this study. These are the need to investigate human behaviour in real-life settings, with a significant role for the observation of development/transformation over time. Both of these tenets will be outlined in greater detail in the following two sub-sections.

### *6.2.2 Investigating context*

One of the major tenets of CHAT is that human behaviour cannot be understood in isolation from the social (Daniels 2001a). Psychological operations and individual actions are both the subjective responses to collective objects and the processes via which they are realised. Thus, an exclusive emphasis on the individual is inadequate for accounting for the role of context in development. Hence, drawing upon theorists such as

Bronfenbrenner, Cole (1996) argues that to understand the way children develop they have to be observed in natural settings, whilst interacting with familiar adults over prolonged periods of time. This position is further developed by Engestrom (1993); who argues that even an emphasis on the individual in interaction under describes the role context plays in development. Engestrom (1993) states:

There is a problem with a focus on dyadic interaction, attempting to define contexts as social situations, as spaces of interactive experience, or as fields of discourse. Although contexts are here seen as interpersonal constructions, they are commonly treated as purely linguistic, symbolic, and experiential entities. This makes context look something like that can be created at will by two or more persons in interaction, as if independently of the deep-seated material practices and socioeconomic structures of the given culture.

(Engestrom 1993, p. 66)

Here, Engestrom critiques the tendency of sociocultural theories to condense issues of context into the study of language (Star 1996). Rather, activity theorists (e.g. Engestrom 2001, Tulviste 1999) argue the need to include the material aspects of activity and their modification over time into the explanation of the origination and development of mind and behaviour in activity. CHAT provides a number of concepts in which to describe behaviour in context, which can be used for temporal and cross-institutional comparison. Thus, to understand the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services in schools it is necessary to include analysis of the rules, division of labour and cultural tools used before, during and after intervention, and to contrast these processes and outcomes at different schools.

Whereas CHAT provides concepts for such an endeavour, Daniels (2001a, 2001b) argues that the theoretical approach benefits from greater specification of the structural elements of activity and particularly how principles of power and control represented by the base of an activity system produce communicational discourses that regulate behaviour, such as approaches to conflict (Bernstein 2000). This area of under-theorisation (Daniels 1993, 2001a) is important because the traditional activity may be underpinned by principles of power and control that conflict with the innovative activity and ultimately affect its

implementation and sustainability. The study of type IV conflicts between alternative models of activity presents an ideal opportunity to research the relationship between forms of social organisation in schools, their transformation and the production of opportunities for new ways of thinking and acting. The language of description developed by Bernstein (2000) can be used by researchers to account for the communicational, organisational and interactional practices of an institution before, during and after intervention.

### *6.2.3 Investigating transformation*

Another major tenet of CHAT is the premise that human behaviour is best studied under development, which subsequently advocates a key role for intervention as a research strategy (Jensen 1999). Vygotsky (1978) proposed that any psychological process, whether it is the development of thought or voluntary behaviour, is a process undergoing change right before the eyes. Tolman (1999) states that research should then be committed to analysing process. In doing so it is necessary to explain rather than describe, as the underlying processes of change are not easily evident from the surface. Vygotsky (1978) described these processes as the fossilisation of human behaviour. Only by looking at behaviour developmentally can a researcher hope to reveal its underlying dynamics. Engestrom (1999a) describes how Sylvia Scribner has demonstrated that Vygotsky's ideas concerning appropriate method cannot be reduced to a single technique. She suggests four steps in conducting research, these are:

1. Observation of contemporary rudimentary\* behaviour.
2. Reconstruction of historical behaviour.
3. Experimental production of change from rudimentary behaviour (Intervention).
4. Observation of the actual development.

(\*Rudimentary behaviour is that which has lost its history. Institutionally, this is characterised by unquestioned cultural practices).

The methodology of CHAT advocates that each of these stages are included in research design. These points are reiterated by Engestrom (1999b); who suggests such a methodology is best developed when researchers actually enter activity systems undergoing transformation. Engestrom (1999b) elaborates that this is not a return to the naiveté of action research (McNiff 1988) but something much more rigorous. Not least, because such an approach incorporates a significant historical aspect (Edwards 2000) and is motivated by object transformation. In Vygotsky's (1978) consideration of method, he argued the need to artificially provoke the development under study. This is the premise of the case for intervention-based research, where the researcher is an active participant.

Intervention occupies a central role in Engestrom's (1987, 19993, 1999a, 1999b) approach to research. Engestrom (1999a) has developed Scribner's notion of appropriate method into deliberate attempts to expand the object of activity. This approach is based upon identifying and aggravating the historical and empirical contradictions of an activity system, developing and implementing alternatives and observing the transformation that may take place. This methodology is of relevance to the research question as it sets out an approach that allows a traditional object (e.g. current approaches to conflict resolution in schools) to be scrutinised and its potential expansion to be observed and explained. Bernstein's (2000) concepts of classification and framing are useful in this regard as they provide a language of description for analysing and reporting how the division of labour and rules of the traditional activity (i.e. who resolves conflict and how) have been transformed. How such an approach can be used within the empirical research design is outlined in the next section.

### **6.3 Empirical research design outline**

Section 6.2 argued that a CHAT approach to empirical research design benefits from the provocation and observation of transformation in actual activity systems. Hence, understanding the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services in

schools warrants a detailed cultural and historical analysis of conflict resolution in schools before, during and after intervention at several sites. However, realising such a design requires a huge investment of time and resources. In light of a discussion of such issues, the writer presents two stages to the empirical research design to account for transformation in both real and historical time at several schools who are implementing or have implemented peer mediation services.

### *6.3.1 Selecting and accounting for activity systems under transformation*

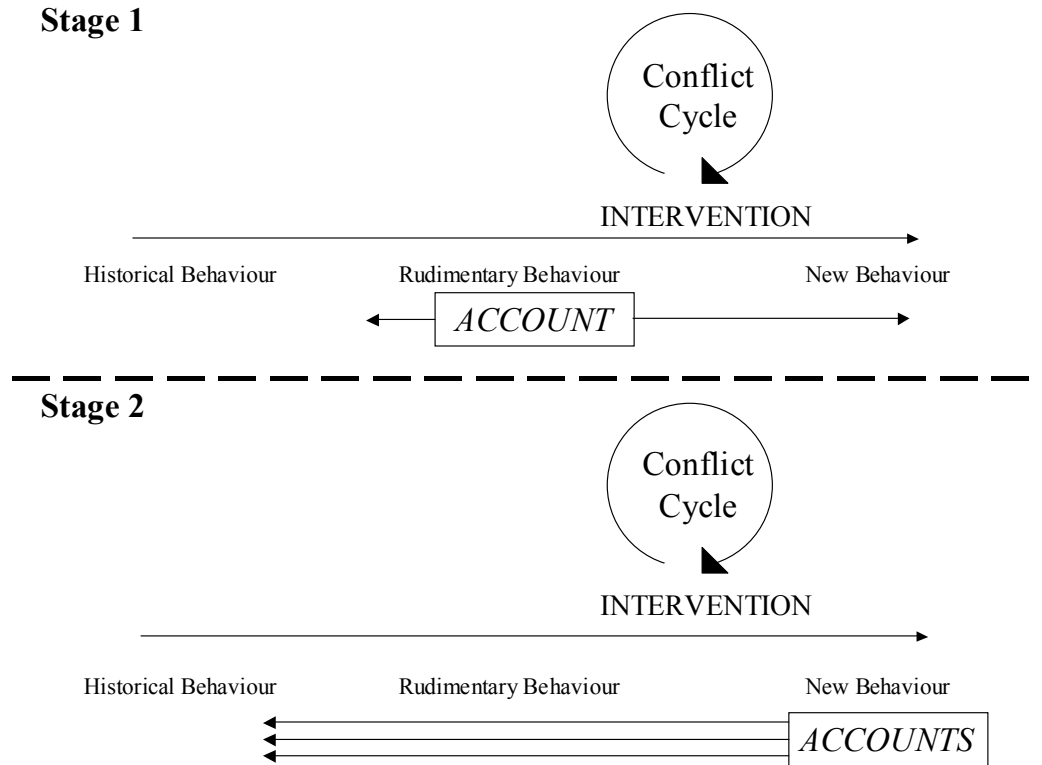
In considering the issues regarding the selection of activity systems undergoing transformation it may be helpful to draw some parallels with issues that confront case study, historical and action researchers (e.g. Walker 1980). This is because such approaches, in contrast to those of the more positivistic approaches of experiments and surveys, emphasise knowing a limited number of research sites intimately. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest the selection of a case or cases in which to conduct qualitative research is crucial. This is because the ‘case’ needs to allow the writer to engage with the conceptual framework developed for the area of study. In other approaches, choosing a sample involves defining the population from which a suitable sample can be made, selection of a representative sample and determination of a suitable sample size (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1996). However, Robson (1993) argues a major distinction between approaches such as case studies and more positivistic approaches are the former’s lack of reliance on a sampling strategy. Most cases are studied for their own sake. In surveys or experiments, a sampling strategy is primarily used in pursuit of the goal of ensuring statistical validity and generalisability.

As previously stated, Engestrom (1999a) suggests that research is best undertaken in actual activity systems undergoing transformation. Achieving such a sample is not problematic as WMQPEP will provide access to a number of schools in which peer mediation training is taking place as well as a number of historical cases in which peer

mediation training has already taken place. In such a sample, the schools are largely self-selected. This is because i) setting up a peer mediation service, even when in response to a perceived need, and ii) agreement to research involvement are both voluntary processes. Making such a commitment is likely to mean at least one influential member of staff from the school is motivated by the aims of both projects and is willing, to a degree, to consider innovative ideas from a variety of sources. Such initial support and reflexive approaches are characteristic of effective schools (Daniels et al 1998), which may distort intervention outcomes. This does not invalidate the research however, as the writer is interested in explaining the processes via which peer mediation is or is not established and sustained at schools that decide to set up such services.

Another issue to consider is that the implementation of an effective peer mediation service can take several school terms or years (Stacey and Robinson 1997). It will be difficult to account for these processes in the time allotted to undertake PhD study. It will also be difficult to commit the resources necessary to provide a thorough account of transformation at several activity systems concurrently. Therefore the writer proposes a two-stage approach to empirical research design.

In stage one, there will be a detailed study of the production of an alternative model of activity at a single school. This will provide an 'account' of a type IV conflict between the traditional activity of conflict resolution in one school and the potentially innovative activity of peer mediation, produced by intervention. In stage two, this 'account' will be contrasted with those of other schools, which have implemented peer mediation with variable success in the past. Stage one, whilst incorporating some historical research, allows detailed analysis of the resolution of conflict between traditional and innovative approaches to conflict resolution, their underpinning principles of power and control and the potential production of a new model of activity. Stage two allows multiple historical accounts of how activity was or was not transformed in comparison schools. Both stages are shown diagrammatically in figure 6.1.



**Figure 6.1: Accounts of interventions**

The advantage of this two-stage approach is that processes which normally occur over several years can be studied and contrasted. Brown (1992) raises a number of issues regarding intervention-based research compensated for by stage two. These are that any intervention tends to have a positive effect merely because of the energy directed at a behaviour under analysis (the Hawthorne Effect) and that short-term effects of interventions are frequently not sustained (the Reality Principle). By investigating whether longstanding transformation has taken place in stage two, both of these effects are negated.

Analysis of the attempted provocation of new behaviour during stage one may result in a number of themes that link modification of the organisational and communicational elements of conflict resolution in school to new behaviour at the interactional level of analysis. This may include description of the conflicts between traditional and innovative



models of activity, their underpinning social relations and the manner in which new forms of activity are produced and modified if the intervention is successful. Processes of transformation observed in real time during stage one can then inform historical analysis of transformation during stage two.

Having set out a two-stage approach to empirical research design, it is necessary to outline them both in greater detail. Each stage contains different emphasises: stage one upon a detailed account of transformation and stage two upon accounts of historical transformation in other schools. Hence, each requires a different approach. The approach of stage one will draw heavily on Engestrom's (1999a, 1999b) theory of expansive learning to structure analysis of activity before, during and after intervention. The approach of stage two centres on interviews with teachers and their accounts of historical transformation. Both stages will be informed by CHAT, Bernstein's (Bernstein 1975, 2000, Daniels et al 1996, Daniels 2001b) attention to how principles of power and control are translated into communicational discourses that regulate approaches to conflict, and the relationship between these principles and transformation of activity.

### *6.3.2 Stage 1: Investigating transformation of one activity system in real time*

Stage one is designed to account for the potential transformation of traditional approaches to conflict resolution at one school as this object is potentially expanded by intervention (see figure 6.1). Engestrom's (1987, 1999a, 1999b) theory of expansive learning can be utilised in this stage to structure analysis of activity before, during and after peer mediation training. According to Engestrom (2001), by intervening, a researcher attempts to expand the object. Engestrom (1999c) states that expanding the object involves creating a new model of activity in which the range of possible actions of subjects is increased. As this happens, the object of conflict resolution in school is problematised. Two alternatives may be considered, a traditional object (the current model of activity)

and an innovative object (an alternative model of activity: peer mediation). Expanding the object may involve subjects acting out new roles using new mediating artefacts. Investigating the process of potential object expansion in stage one allows the study of a type IV conflict between alternative models of activity. Bernstein's (2000) concepts of classification and framing can be used to describe the principles of power and control underpinning these alternative models and their relationship to object expansion. This will include analysis of the division of labour and rules for resolving conflict before, during and after intervention.

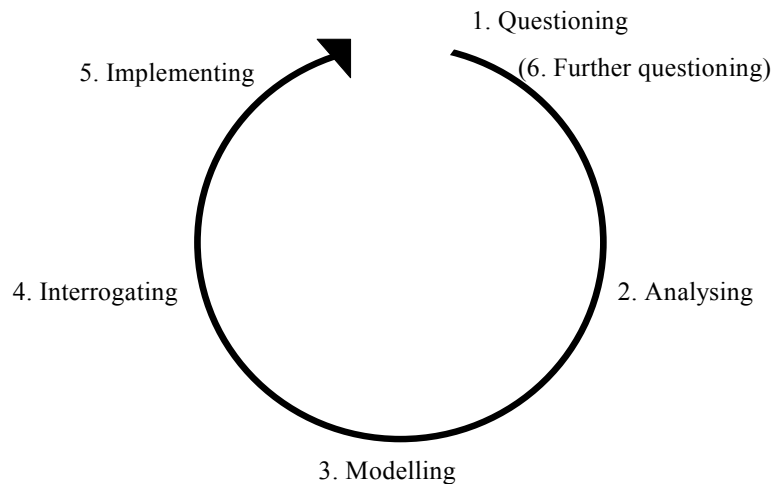
An expansive learning approach to research actualises Scribner's (Engestrom 1999a) stages of appropriate method. The stages outline historical research, observation of rudimentary behaviour, provocation and observation of new behaviour. Thus, these stages can be used to analyse historical, empirical and new forms of activity before, during and after intervention. The stages of an expansive learning approach to research are:

1. The first action is that of questioning, criticising, or rejecting some aspects of the accepted practice and existing wisdom. For the sake of simplicity, this action is called questioning (and is akin to Scribner's stage of observing rudimentary behaviour).
2. The second action is that of analysing the situation. Analysis involves mental, discursive, or practical transformation of the situation in order to find out causes or explanatory mechanisms. Analysis evokes 'why?' questions and explanatory principles. One type of analysis is historical-genetic, it seeks to explain the situation by tracing its origination and evolution. Another type of analysis is actual-empirical; it seeks to explain the situation by constructing a picture of its inner systemic relations. (Both are akin to Scribner's stage of reconstructing historical/rudimentary behaviour).
3. The third action is that of modelling the newly found explanatory relationship in some publicly observable and transmittable medium. This means constructing an explicit, simplified model of the new idea that explains and offers a solution to the problematic situation.

4. The fourth action is that of examining the model, running, operating and experimenting on it in order to fully grasp its dynamics, potentials, and limitations.
5. The fifth action is that of implementing the model, concretising it by means of practical applications, enrichments, and conceptual extensions. (Stages three to five are akin to Scribner's stages of provoking and observing changes in rudimentary behaviour.)

Engestrom (1999b, pp. 383-384, additions in brackets)

Daniels et al (2000) summarise these stages into shorthand, which can then be represented cyclically. They become:



**Figure 6.2: An expansive learning approach to research.**

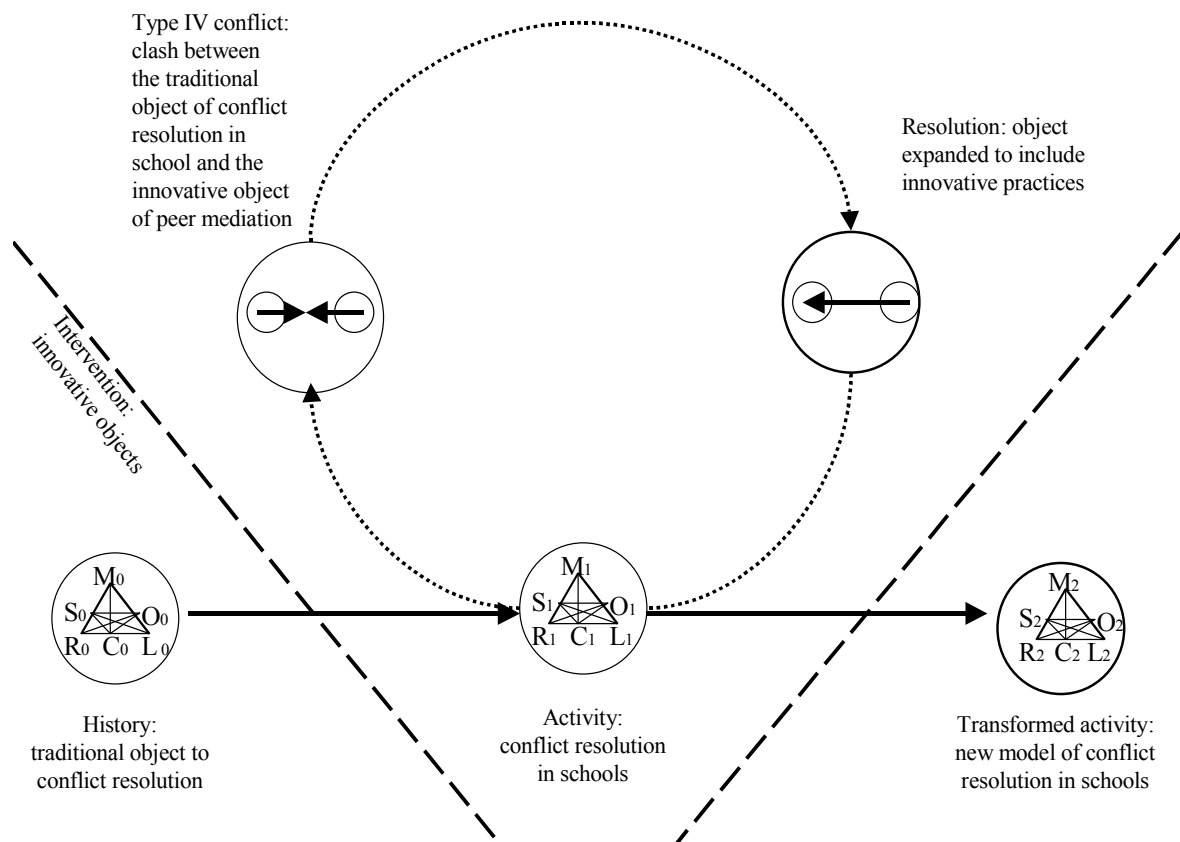
As another expansive cycle occurs, the first stage, questioning, can be repeated. This creates a sixth stage, which further questions the new model of activity. Stage one of the empirical research design can then be structured according to these six stages, as now outlined.

The questioning and analysing stages involve the identification and critique of the school's historical and empirical approaches to conflict resolution (Engestrom 1999a). This incorporates investigation of how the traditional activity is structured, including the manner in which conflicts are currently resolved and the reasons for this approach. Such data can be collected from staff members and pupils, via group and individual interviews and questionnaires of the schools existing organisational and communicational practices. 'Checkpoints' (Forum on Children and Violence 1999 and appendix 1a) provides a tool for conducting an audit of how a school's environment, organisation, values, curriculum, training and community relationships promote non-violent approaches to conflict. A questionnaire developed by Markham (1999 and appendix 1b) provides another tool for gauging how principles of power and control are translated into matters of school organisation and pedagogic practice.

The modelling and examining stages involve the identification of the contradictions of the current approaches to conflict resolution by the staff and the consideration of the potential advantages and practical ramifications of an alternative approach to conflict resolution: peer mediation. Presuming the staff are willing to go ahead, peer mediation training and the establishment of a service can then proceed. Together, these stages represent the potential provocation of new behaviour and require thorough description, best provided by researcher participation (Engestrom 1999a).

Progress through these stages should culminate in a rich set of data, which will inform both the research and the intervention itself. These data may include audible recordings of pupil and staff interviews/discussions as well as a number of visual documents, such as group 'brainstorms' produced during the process. In conducting interviews, attention will need to be given to their function (Seale 1998b), procedures (Cohen and Manion 1994, Robson 1993), language use (Faber and Mazlish 1999) and analysis (Seale and Kelly 1998). These approaches will be discussed as the data is presented in chapters seven and eight.

The implementation of a peer mediation service is aimed at expanding the traditional object (the current model for resolving conflicts in school), in particular the manner in which inter-pupil conflicts are managed. In doing so, a new model of activity may be implemented in which pupils assume new roles and use new tools. Synthesis of Engestrom's (1999a) theory of expansive learning with a conflict cycle (figure 5.6) postulates a type IV conflict cycle between alternative models of activity, which may be resolved to transform the traditional activity. This is shown in figure 6.3.



**Figure 6.3: The transformation of an activity system as a result of an intervention**

CHAT (Engestrom and Miettinen 1999, Lektorsky 1999) recognises two continuous processes ongoing in institutions. These are the reproduction of culture and the creation of new models of activity that make transformation possible. Figure 6.3 suggests that the production of an alternative model of activity by the peer mediation training provider may transform the current model of activity. Engestrom (1999c) states that the production of a new model of activity may modify and conflict with elements of the current activity. As previously discussed, traditional and innovative activities may be underpinned by contrasting principles of power and control, which may have an impact upon the latter's implementation and sustainability. In Griffith's (1996) analysis of peer mediation training in Scottish schools, he noted a number of such conflicts. These and potential others include:

- Resistance from staff to change current management practices.
- Insufficient pupil endorsement.
- Contradictions between traditional and innovative activities.
- Inadequate planning and preparation of the intervention.
- Objects competing with the intervention for attention. For example, curriculum commitments impeding time to implement the new model effectively.
- Insufficient funding.

When (and if) these and many other obstacles to intervention are resolved, the innovative activity may transform elements of the traditional activity, including its division of labour and rules (Engestrom 1999c). The school may then reproduce these elements as what was once innovative becomes traditional. The processes via which new elements of activity are produced and reproduced are of vital interest to CHAT researchers (Daniels 2001a) and to the aims of this study.

Some time after the intervention, the crux of stage one will be the final phase, involving further questioning and analysis. Only, the focus of this episode of questioning will be the approaches to conflict resolution produced by the new model of activity. This account will be largely derived from additional interviews with pupils and staff members, who

will be asked to reflect upon the transformation process and any changes in their own approaches to conflict resolution.

Analysis of processes of transformation is best undertaken by qualitative research methods (Miles and Huberman 1994, Ratner 1997), as argued in chapter three. Whereas Ratner (1997) advocates the primacy of such approaches for researching cultural and psychological phenomena, he also suggests quantitative methods can have a place in supporting the findings drawn from qualitative data. Hence, interview data can be supplemented by asking pupils to complete life in school indexes (Arora 1994, 1999), which can be used to provide measures of bullying and general aggression before, during and after intervention. Given that the literature (e.g. Stacey 1996) suggests peer mediation training may result in improved scores on self-esteem scales (Maines and Robinson 1998), the opportunity to collect such data should be taken for comparison with other research studies. Jensen (1999) also reminds activity theorists of the need to include analysis of material practices in their research in addition to subjective accounts provided by interview data. This requirement is partly fulfilled by researcher participation in the change process. Interview data can also be supplemented by observation notes, analysis of the actual tools produced by intervention and visual documentation of change (Engestrom 2001).

### *6.3.3 Stage 2: Investigating transformation of several activity systems over historical time*

The principal aim of stage two of the empirical research design is to understand processes of object expansion at several schools over an extended period of time (see figure 6.1). Whereas stage one provides a detailed investigation of transformation in one school, stage two investigates longstanding transformation in different schools. To provide data for analysis in stage two, interviews will be conducted with teachers at schools where peer mediation training has been delivered in the past. Processes of transformation observed in stage one may identify, albeit tentatively, many of the issues involved in

implementing such services, which will inform the design of research interviews conducted during stage two. In these interviews, teachers may recount the practical issues of attempting to introduce a peer mediation service and the merits and limitations of this new model of activity where established. Of particular interest will be whether implementing peer mediation services has modified the organisational, communicational and interactional elements of conflict resolution in schools.

Activities in schools are often seen as uniform in their organisational and communicational modalities and their effect upon psychological phenomena (Daniels 2001a, 2001b). Yet, peer mediation can be multifarious in its training, implementation and outcomes (Johnson and Johnson 1996). Stage two provides a critical opportunity for cross-institutional analysis, particularly where peer mediation training has resulted in different outcomes. The activity system provides concepts that can be used to contrast the diverse practices and effects of implementing peer mediation services in schools. Of particular utility are the notions of rules and division of labour, which may or may not be modified by intervention.

However, Daniels (2001a) argues that the use of the activity system as an analytical device does not sufficiently articulate both cultural differences and the relationship between structure and interaction. It is important to incorporate this consideration into the empirical research design because implementing a peer mediation service is likely to result in a type IV conflict between traditional and innovative activities. To understand processes of transformation it is necessary to analyse how each activity may be underpinned by contrasting principles of power and control, which may have an impact upon the outcomes and sustainability of the new model. Bernstein's (Bernstein 1975, 2000, Daniels et al 1996, Daniels 2001a, 2001b) concepts of classification and framing can be used to give greater explication of concepts such as 'division of labour' and 'rules'. Specifically, who resolves conflict and how, and whether these social relations are modified by intervention to produce new tools and psychological possibilities.



The school organisation and pedagogic practice questionnaire used in stage one can also be used as a tool to compare the organisational and communicational practices of schools where object expansion has and has not taken place in stage two. This questionnaire, formulated by Daniels et al (1996) and developed by Markham (1999, also appendix 1b), uses Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing to record how power and control is expressed in different modalities of organisation and pedagogy in different schools. Answers to the questionnaire provide researchers with an indication of whether aspects of these practices relevant to this study (e.g. issues of discipline and behaviour management) are strongly or weakly classified and framed, which can then be related to intervention outcomes. How the questionnaire is interpreted is the subject of further discussion in section 8.2b.

### **6.5 Issues to consider during data collection**

All research attempts to investigate predetermined questions in a manner, which is reliable, valid and ethical. Methodological choices must be made during this process, which will be shaped by the researcher's world-view and subsequent selection of tools for data collection. To conclude this chapter, it is necessary to consider general issues of data collection presented by the empirical research design so far outlined. According to Robson (1993) a key aspect of any research is establishing trustworthiness in the methods used. This raises issues of reliability, validity and generalisability (Elliott 1980, Robson 1993, Tonkiss 1998).

Wardekker (2000) argues that the terms of reliability, validity and generalisability are inappropriate for research using a CHAT approach, a point revisited in the critical commentary at the end of this chapter. Wardekker (2000) argues further that such terms belong to a positivistic paradigm less relevant to a theoretical approach concerned with processes of human development. Instead, he argues the need for activity theorists to develop criteria for the adequacy of CHAT research based on the central tenets of the

theory itself. These could include whether a particular theoretical or empirical problem has been solved (Tolman 1999). Whereas Wardekker's (2000) critique may be accurate, and is indeed a major consideration of the empirical research design so far outlined, it may be helpful for the novice researcher to consider issues of reliability and validity in order to avoid using research tools carelessly and drawing unsubstantiated conclusions. This is also important because although aspects of appropriate method in CHAT are incorporated into the empirical research design (e.g. entering activity systems under transformation) a number of more conventional techniques (e.g. interviews) are also incorporated.

LeCompte and Goetz (1982) review some of the problems of reliability and validity in research. LeCompte and Goetz (1982, p. 32) outline that 'while reliability is concerned with the replicability of scientific findings, validity is concerned with the accuracy of scientific findings'. Using their review, their definitions of internal/external validity and reliability are represented in figure 6.4. The implications of both reliability and validity for empirical research are then discussed in turn.

	Reliability	Validity
Internal	The tools used in data collection would give the same results if repeated on the same group. They measure what is intended to be measured.	Causal relationships observed actually describe the effect of factor A on B.
External	The tools of data collection would give comparable results if used on a comparable group.	Causal relationships observed are applicable to comparable groups.

**Figure 6.4: Internal/external reliability and validity (based on LeCompte and Goetz 1982)**

#### *a) Reliability*

Reliability refers to whether the tools used in data collection would give the same results if repeated on the same and comparable groups (internal and external reliability respectively) and whether they measure what they intend to measure. An instrument is

reliable if it measures the same thing each time it is used in the same circumstances. Clearly this is more difficult with qualitative research and less important regarding research engaged with the cultural nature of phenomena. However, the empirical research design of this thesis will benefit from adherence to endeavours to ensure reliability when conducting interviews and in the completion of any questionnaires.

Interviews can be tape-recorded and transcribed according to set procedures (Seale and Kelly 1998, Silverman 1998) to make sure they are represented accurately and the participants have been asked similar questions. When conducting interviews, Robson (1993) emphasises the ‘reliability’ of the researcher, who needs to be familiar with their topic of enquiry and possess skills such as good listening and question construction. This is particularly important when interviewing children who may be reluctant to share data, especially that which presents themselves negatively (e.g. getting into conflict). Faber and Mazlish (1999) outline a number of strategies that engage the honest cooperation of young interviewees. Two such strategies are the use of non-blaming language and the use of visual imagery to engage dialogue in exploring difficult topics.

Interviewing can be problematic (Robson 1993). For example, the reliability of the interview procedure will be challenged by the interviewees’ interpretation of the purpose of the interview (Tomlinson 1989). Whether what is said is what was actually meant is challenged by a) the active and idiosyncratic nature of human understanding and language, and b) the potential social influence of the interviewer; points also reiterated in a sociocultural perspective (Mercer 1995). In pursuit of the researcher’s own interests, they may miss the interviewee’s construals and reactions. Alternatively, over emphasis on the interviewee’s perspectives may fail to do justice to the researcher’s own agenda. To resolve this, Tomlinson (1989) suggests hierarchical focusing. This works as a checklist of hierarchically organised topics and sub-topics to be covered during an interview, whilst remaining faithful to the methodology of open-ended and exploratory questions. Thus, accounts of both the interviewee’s subjective responses and the researcher’s agenda are gained. Although interview schedules are used in both stages one and two of the empirical research design of this thesis, they are used as checklists of the

subjects to be covered in an interview and not necessarily read out in order. Hierarchical focusing informs all the interviews completed for this thesis by allowing the interviewee to recount from their own experience in an order logical to themselves.

#### *b) Validity*

Steps can be taken to make the methods of data collection more reliable, including ensuring that any factors that may affect participants' performance are controlled. However, this does not make the data valid. Validity refers to whether relationships observed and described as causal actually are (internal validity) and whether this would be true of comparable groups (external validity). LeCompte and Goetz (1982) argue that credibility in research can only be achieved by identifying all causal and consequential factors. Farrington (2002) states that research needs to convince the reader that a cause precedes an effect, that they are related and no other alternative explanations exist.

Regarding internal validity, Brown (1992) indicates that intervention based research needs to be careful to not just select data, which supports the researcher's agenda. Reassurance can be given to the reader by providing quantitative information about the frequency of data selected to support assertions. In achieving internal validity, the researcher has to be aware of a number of threats. Cook and Campbell (1979) identify twelve threats to internal validity, those that are relevant to intervention-based research such as CHAT, are described below.

1. History- the researcher needs to be aware of things, which may have changed in the participants' environment. For example, a reduction in serious incidents on a school playground after an intervention may be invalid if it were also associated with the permanent exclusion of a 'school-bully'.
2. Changing the instrumentation during the research process, [though, according to Robson (1993) this is less important in approaches employing multiple methods].
3. Mortality or some form of exclusion of a key subject of the research.

4. Attributing to an intervention what is actually a natural product of maturation, for example, change in height over time.
5. Ambiguity about causal direction. For example, does a cause b or the other way around?

In analysing data, each of these points needs to be carefully considered. In fact, it was attention to one of these threats to internal validity, which caused an initial attempt at stage one of the empirical research design to be abandoned and a new school selected for investigation. Research at one school had already commenced when three members of the teaching staff tendered their resignation. As this was a small school, this represented a staff turnover of 30%. This posed a number of threats, most notably that intervention outcomes might be significantly affected by the effective ‘mortality’ of several key subjects of the research and the subsequent impact upon the culture of the school. The replacement, temporarily or permanently, of such a high percentage of the staff meant that any intervention could not be validly related to changes in approaches to conflict resolution. The change in staff would have undoubtedly resulted in shifts in the collective values of teachers, if not the actual organisation and pedagogic practice of the school. As a result, a more stable case study was selected.

If the researcher is interested in applying theory derived from research to other groups or other settings, they are concerned with the generalisability of their data. This is referred to as external validity (Campbell and Stanley 1963, Tonkiss 1998). Whilst in-depth research conducted at one activity system may be strong in internal validity (Robson 1993), Stake (1995) states that a study of a single or small number of cases in detail is a poor choice for generalisation because of the emphasis on knowledge of a case intimately, at the expense of others. This is why stage two of the empirical research design is important in understanding processes via which transformation in different schools does or does not take place.

According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), threats to external validity are individualistic and ecological fallacies. The individualistic fallacy refers to drawing inferences about groups, societies, or nations from evidence about the behaviour of

individuals. Conversely, the ecological fallacy refers to the drawing of inferences about individuals directly from evidence gathered about groups, societies or nations. Ways of delimiting the threats to external validity are pinpointed by LeCompte and Goetz (1982). They state that the following points need to be considered when making generalisations:

1. Selection. Are findings specific to the group studied?
2. Setting. Are findings specific to the context studied?
3. History. Have unique historical events affected the research?
4. Construct effects. Are the constructs particular to the research group?

Whereas these threats require a degree of safeguarding, the unification of culture and mind within CHAT presents a challenge to both individual and ecological fallacies. CHAT presents a view of human development as entwined with collective practices, where the ability of human beings to transform their settings and subsequently themselves occupies a central tenet. The emphasis of research upon the notion of ‘activity’ focuses the researcher’s attention upon the relationships between conditions/operations, actions/goals and activity/motives (Leontiev 1978). Thus, the writer is well positioned to comment upon individual and group development as a dialectical process.

Cultural psychologists and activity theorists such as Ratner (1997) and Wardekker (2000) argue that CHAT is well placed to explain the spatial and temporal order of events because unlike more positivistic approaches, researchers actually enter activity systems and observe development at close hand. Hence, CHAT is an approach that is potentially strong regarding internal validity. Furthermore, if new models of activity can be shown to work in comparable settings as Engestrom (1999a) urges, the approach can also demonstrate strength regarding external validity.

*c) Ethics*

Any research design needs to consider potential ethical issues, which may arise in the collection of data and how these will be dealt with (Kelly 1998, Simons 1989). Robson (1993, p. 33) provides a checklist of ten questionable practices to be considered in social research design. These are based on guidance from the British Psychological Society. Application of this guidance to the empirical research design requires a number of practices to be observed.

First, consent must be gained from those participating in the research. This process should include informing participants about what the research is for and how the data will be collected and used. This is problematic when the research involves the potential modification of activity. Kelly (1984) argues the need to be explicit about the aims and values of attempting to change practice:

In advocating change, values have to be made explicit, whereas values can more easily be taken for granted, or never made explicit, when studying the reproduction of the present state of affairs.

(Kelly 1984, p. 101)

Therefore, when a school agrees to participate in stage one of the empirical research design, they need to be aware of and agree to the intention of implementing a new model of activity. In such cases, Robson (1993) advocates that the research should allow those affected by the intervention to co-shape the form of the work.

Second, interviewees involved should be aware of their rights to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality (Cohen and Manion 1994). Such procedures should minimise any anxiety interviews may cause. Third and finally, any 'action/intervention-based' research should be terminated if it is having a clear and detrimental effect upon the activity under investigation. Each of the practices described in this section will be observed as the empirical research is conducted.

## 6.6 Summary and critical commentary

CHAT offers a distinctive approach to research that can be summarised as provoking and studying human development in real settings. Application of these epistemological tenets resulted in the design of a two-staged approach to empirical research. Stage one involves the deliberate provocation of a type IV conflict cycle in real time. Engestrom's (1987, 1999a, 1999b) theory of expansive learning is utilised to plan, execute and analyse this investigation. The approach, derived from Scribner (Engestrom 1999a), offers a systematic realisation of the four steps of appropriate post-Vygotskian method: reconstruction of historical behaviour, observation of rudimentary behaviour and the deliberate provocation and observation of new behaviour. In doing so, a collective change process is charted, emerging from two sources: the traditional practices of conflict resolution in school and the potentially innovative practice of peer mediation. Engestrom's (1999a) thinking reflects a cultural theory of mind, where new ways of thinking and acting are produced and distributed within and between activity systems. Stage two involves the historical study of type IV conflict cycles at other schools (figure 6.1). Together, processes that normally take several years can be studied as part of a PhD thesis.

Although methodology within CHAT cannot be reduced to a single technique (Engestrom 1999a), it is important to draw some distinctions between evaluation, intervention/action-based research and the empirical research design outlined. Robson (1993, p. 174) states that 'evaluations are essentially indistinguishable from other research in terms of design, data collection techniques and methods of analysis'. Robson (1993) outlines further that evaluations are employed multifariously and are conducted with varying purposes. Sometimes they describe experiments, on other occasions they describe case studies and they also constitute stages in a design that inform the subject under evaluation itself.



To clarify the term, Barnes (1982) refers to summative and formative types of evaluation. A summative evaluation attempts to appraise the value or worth of something. Often in educational research this is the assessment of the effects or effectiveness of an initiative. Barnes (1982) adds that summative evaluation frequently tests outcomes measures such as knowledge and skills demonstrated by participants after a new programme, practice, innovation, intervention or policy. In some contrast, formative evaluation refers to the more spontaneous acts of gauging the worth of a new practice as it is enacted and drawing upon the immediate lessons learned to shape ongoing and future practice (Robson 1993). In doing so, evaluation becomes an intrinsic component of reflection and modification of practice.

Robson (1993) states that different programmes differ in their emphasis on summative and formative evaluation. The traditional view of evaluation measures how far a new initiative meets its stated objectives or goals by measuring outcomes. This approach, still very dominant, does not provide the researcher with information regarding how objectives are achieved. Whereas evaluation can be conducted to test peer mediators' knowledge and skills after training, this provides little insight regarding processes of development and which aspects of training are translated into outcomes (Johnson and Johnson 1996). Such an approach to research treats peer mediation training and crude outcome measures as independent and dependent variables respectively, criticised as making erroneous ontological and epistemological assumptions in chapter three.

According to Barnes (1982), a number of these problems are solved by process evaluation, which includes observation of a programme as it is implemented and privileges the observation of what actually takes place rather than what is intended to take place. However, Engestrom (1999a) warns that such approaches concentrate their analysis at the level of actions and yield little information regarding the production of new forms of activity. An activity theoretical account of processes and outcomes requires description of how objective conditions are changed, an account of subjective responses to these changes and an exploration of how new patterns of social relations are translated into new forms of communication.

Formative evaluation is an integral component of ‘action research’, a term appropriated by Lewin (1946), who formulated an approach to research involving cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. According to Robson (1993), Lewin saw action research as a way of bringing about more democratic processes in institutions, which empowered people with greater autonomy in the change process. Action research is commonly orientated to a specific problem in a specific context, often characterised by a small-scale intervention and close examination of its effects conducted by one or more teachers, sometimes in liaison with a researcher (Cohen and Manion 1994, McNiff 1988). Action research both assumes and advocates that for interventions to be successful and sustainable they need to utilise local knowledge in their design and realisation (Hughes 2003).

The principles of action research are close to that of CHAT and particularly stage one of the empirical research design outlined in this chapter. However, it is necessary to draw some important distinctions. Changing practice is a central motivation of methodology within CHAT, underpinned by Marx’s axiom that the role of philosophers is not to interpret the world but to change it (Hedegaard et al 1999, Jensen 1999). Many ‘evaluators’ are often so concerned by the conditions they observe they are compelled to act to change them, where the researcher abandons the neutral position of observer to assume the more politicised role of change-agent. The position of the researcher undertaking this thesis is certainly motivated by the values of promoting non-violent responses to conflict, as introduced in chapter one. When researchers ‘intervene’, they often do so to make conditions better. However, in doing so they may also make matters worse. On ethical grounds, researchers should withdraw if intervention proves detrimental (Kelly 1984). Stimulating change ‘for the better’ may be a concern for many activity theorists, however it is also a fundamental component of understanding human development (Vygotsky 1978).

Variations of action research (Hughes 2003, McNiff 1988) and CHAT research (Jensen 1999) are underpinned by a dialectical notion of theory and practice. However, in CHAT the concept of ‘activity’ as an explanatory principle, object of study and subject of

intervention is paramount. CHAT's ontological view of human behaviour constitutes a theory of mind in which human beings are able to modify societal conditions and transform themselves through this process. This is expressed as an epistemology in which provocation of new models of activity form an appropriate method for the study of human development in process (Engestrom 1999a, Hedegaard et al 1999). Scribner's elaboration of Vygotsky's notion of appropriate method, described by Engestrom (1999a), is particularly influential upon the design of empirical research for this study. She suggests that appropriate method is characterised by the provocation of new behaviour (intervention) situated in a cultural and historical analysis of this development. Figure 6.3 takes the writer's model of conflict from the previous chapter to represent the deliberate provocation of a type IV conflict, between alternative models of activity. It is conjectured that intervention may result in expansion of the traditional object, which can be studied in real time in stage one of the empirical research design and in historical time in stage two.

The emphasis on activity in approaches to research represents a significant methodological distinction between action research and CHAT. In advocating that research within CHAT apply a radical but rigorous localism, Engestrom's (1999a) distances the approach from action research. Engestrom (1999a) argues that whilst action research idealises spontaneous ideas and efforts from practitioners, developing new models of activity is informed by meticulous historical and empirical analysis of the existing and preceding contradictions inherent in activity before their practical implementation and validation. Edwards (2000) states that the activity system represents a potentially useful analytical tool in this regard, as it allows the relationships within and between activity systems to be identified and become the subject of the generation of ideas for potential change. In doing so, the researcher engages in forming societally new artefacts and forms of practice jointly with their subjects. Observation of such processes is central to the empirical research design of stage one and represents the subject of interviews to be conducted in stage two.

Robson (1993) highlights that a major criticism of action research is its belief that school staff can identify and plan to alter their own assumptions and power arrangements. The aggravation and analysis of contradictions during periods of transformation is a central feature of CHAT research. Engestrom (1999c) states,

when an activity system adopts a new element from the outside (*for example the innovative object of peer mediation*), it often leads to an aggravated secondary contradiction where some old element (for example, the rules or division of labour) collides with the new one.

(Engestrom 1999c, p. 5, addition in italics)

The work of Bernstein (2000) suggests that the production of new elements of activity may be much more than a superficial collision but represent a stark contrast in objectified forms of power and control, such as the rules and division of labour underpinning different models of activity. Matters, without being condescending, that may elude lay professionals. Hence, the role of the researcher is important in being both a co-catalyst and observer of change. Daniels (2001a) suggests such a role is assisted by the language of description developed by Bernstein (2000). This allows researchers to describe school organisational, communicational and interactional practices and how interventions change these practices by modifying aspects of activity. Such an approach facilitates analysis of schools as cultural systems with idiosyncratic practices that enable or constrain the development of new forms of activity.

To conclude this critical commentary it is worth briefly returning to issues of reliability, validity and generalisability. Small-scale research involving change often receives criticism because it does not adhere strictly to a scientific-positivistic paradigm. Often this is because the approach has little regard for the generalisability of its findings because intervention is a pragmatic response to a specific problem in a specific setting (Cohen and Manion 1994, Hughes 2003). In this sense, the approach is antithetical to traditional experimental research as there is little concern for isolating variables and replicating analysis across a large sample in the pursuit of external validity. However, the notion that large-scale quantitative studies are more adequate in producing reliable, valid and generalisable research findings is

challenged by advocates of qualitative research methods (e.g. Miles and Huberman 1994) and many cultural psychologists and activity theorists (e.g. Engestrom 1999a, Ratner 1997, Wardekker 2000). Wardekker (2000) argues that,

concepts like validity, reliability, and generalisability do not have fixed meaning and do not by themselves define the scientific character of research. Rather, they form part of a paradigmatic discussion in which their seemingly objective character is used to exert power.

(Wardekker 2000, p. 260)

Instead, activity theorists like Engestrom (1999a) employ a more pragmatic approach to such issues. He states, ‘the validity and generalisability of the results will be decided by the viability, diffusion, and multiplication of those new models in similar activity systems’ (Engestrom 99a, p.36). Stages one and two of the empirical research design represent a novel approach to this problem by studying the processes of transformation at one school in detail and whether such processes are or are not replicated at other schools.

## **CHAPTER 7: THE PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES OF IMPLEMENTING A PEER MEDIATION SERVICE AT AN ACTIVITY SYSTEM UNDER TRANSFORMATION<sup>1</sup>**

### **7.1 Introduction**

Chapter seven presents the data derived from stage one of the empirical research design (see figure 6.1), hereon referred to as ‘stage one’. In stage one, a type IV conflict between traditional and innovative objects is deliberately provoked. The traditional object represents the current model of activity for resolving interpersonal conflicts in school, referred to as the ‘traditional activity’ in the text. The innovative object represents an alternative model of activity (peer mediation) referred to as the ‘innovative activity’ in the text. The data presented shows how:

- principles of power and control underpinning traditional and innovative activities enabled and constrained transformation,
- expansion of the traditional object produced new rules, means of dividing labour and tools (Engestrom 1999b, 1999c), and
- the implementation of the innovative activity produced different experiences of conflict and its resolution for individual subjects.

Concepts from CHAT and elaboration of the theory within this thesis guide the methodological approach and inform the analysis of transformation.

Engestrom’s (1999b) theory of expansive learning is used to provide a framework for understanding processes, which may or may not enable object expansion. This approach, influenced by Scribner (Engestrom 1999a), offers a systematic progression through four

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<sup>1</sup> Part of this chapter was presented to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Nordic Baltic Conference on Activity Theory and Sociocultural Research, Ronneby, Sweden 8<sup>th</sup> September 2001.

steps of post-Vygotskian method: reconstruction of historical behaviour, observation of rudimentary behaviour and the deliberate provocation and observation of new behaviour. The intervention can then be observed and explained within and against processes of cultural reproduction and transformation. Analysis of the traditional activity before, during and after intervention goes beyond the limitations of summative and formative types of evaluation described in the critical commentary of the previous chapter to understand the production of an alternative model of activity, with potential modifications to the tools, rules and division of labour of the system (Engestrom 1999a). The application of an expansive learning approach (Engestrom 1999b) to stage one of the research can be described by the following epistemic actions:

1. **Questioning.** This phase accounts for rudimentary behaviour and articulates the current problem. The aim of ‘questioning’ is to provide information regarding current approaches to conflict resolution in school. It is informed by document analysis of curriculum and behaviour policies, questionnaires of school organisation and pedagogic practice (Markham 1999, appendix 1a) and ‘checkpoints’ for non-violence (Forum on Children and Violence 1999, appendix 1b), pupil interviews and notes on a school visit.
2. **Analysing.** This phase seeks to explain how rudimentary behaviour came about, i.e. what are the antecedents of conflicts at school, how are they resolved and what are the reasons (if any) for the current model of activity. A staff meeting, which was tape-recorded and transcribed, explores teachers’ perceptions of these issues during a group discussion.
3. **Modelling/Interrogating.** After questioning and analysis of the current model of activity, staff members consider the merits and limitations of a peer mediation service as an alternative model of activity and the practical ramifications of implementing such a service. This session included a presentation of data collected from the previous phases, and was also tape-recorded and transcribed.
4. **Implementing.** This phase involves the implementation of the alternative model of activity and is akin to the phase in which Scribner (Engestrom 1999a) advocates the provocation of new behaviour. Peer mediation training was delivered to a Year 5

class, conflict resolution skills training to Years 3 & 4 and the service launched. Reflection on each session was kept in a journal.

5. **Further questioning.** In this phase the new model of activity is further questioned. It is the final component of stage one of the empirical research design but could form the beginning of a new expansive/conflict cycle for the school, as new behaviour becomes the focus of continued reflection and modification. Interviews with pupils, teachers, lunchtime supervisors and parents were undertaken to provide reflection upon the intervention and its impact on the activity of conflict resolution in school. The opportunity was also taken to administer questionnaires to measure potential changes in self-esteem, locus of control, and levels of bullying/general aggression before, during and after the intervention to supplement the qualitative research.

The data collected through these phases involves substantial qualitative data analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe the process of qualitative data analysis as sequential steps in data collection, its reduction and display in order that conclusions can be drawn from the material. Data reduction involves the selection and codification of important sections from transcripts and field notes so they can be retrieved later for more thorough analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe this process as first-level coding, where segments of information are summarised. Data display then involves the retrieval of these codes to search for patterns. Summaries are further refined into smaller numbers of sets or themes. Conclusions are then made based on the identification of these patterns. The key concepts of CHAT were used to summarise segments and identify patterns in the qualitative data, a process which will be reported in greater detail in section 7.6. Such analysis resulted in the identification of the following themes:

- Shift in the division of labour of the traditional activity.
- Synergy between the principles of power and control underpinning traditional and innovative activities.
- The production of a shared object.
- The production of tools.



Supplementary quantitative measures of intervention outcomes were also taken. Before each phase of the approach and themes identified in the data are presented, the manner in which the school was selected and its background are described.

#### *a) School selection*

The school was selected for its own sake (Robson 1993) as containing an activity system about to undergo transformation (Engestrom 1999a). There were not many alternatives, as a school was needed that was ready to commence the intervention as soon as possible after investigation at a previous school was abandoned. The selected school offered two essential requirements for an investigation of this nature: accessibility and openness. First, the school volunteered. They agreed the time and resources for planning and implementing a peer mediation service and its investigation. Secondly, the area of conflict resolution was one the school wished to develop and was consequently open to new ideas. Additionally, after a prior attempt at arranging a case study was abandoned because of threats to internal validity (Tonkiss 1998) presented by a high staff turnover, a number of safeguards/assurances were sought. These centred around a notion of stability. No turnover of staff was expected and no other interventions were planned during the following two school terms.

#### *b) School background*

The school's most recent OfSTED inspection was in 1998 under its present headteacher. The report, available on the OfSTED website, and observations made in field notes provide some background to the school. The selected school is a primary (infant and junior) school situated in the West Midlands of England. It provides education for 3 to 11 year-olds with one class per academic year. The school roll is 239 with a limit of 35 per class and is presently over subscribed. The school has 58 children on the register of special educational needs, 11 with statements. Attendance is rated as satisfactory nationally and better than average locally.

The school is situated in two buildings. One serves its Nursery, Reception and Year 1 classes. The remainder of the children are educated in another building, which includes its offices, reception area, IT suite, hall and dining facilities. The accommodation is modern and some areas have been recently refurbished. The OfSTED report states the school's outside spaces (front and back playgrounds) are bare and unwelcoming. In response, the school has rebuilt the front wall, segregated pedestrian and vehicle access, landscaped the grounds and introduced a number of playground activities (e.g. basketball hoops). The school is located on a busy road, which serves a regional shopping complex and industrial area. The majority of its pupils live in nearby high-rise accommodation. The school is in the most deprived area of the borough with unemployment in the area above the national average. Thirty-four per cent of children are entitled to free school meals.

The OfSTED inspection of 1998 praised the school's emphasis on personal and social development, which is well balanced with academic provision. Attainment in most of the national curriculum subjects meets national expectations despite lower than average baseline assessment at pupil entry. Standards of behaviour in the classroom and around the school were recognised as good.

## **7.2 Questioning**

The first phase of an expansive learning approach to research (Engestrom 1999b) is questioning. The aim of this phase is to account for and criticise aspects of the traditional activity under investigation, observing rudimentary behaviour in the process, as advocated by Scribner (Engestrom 1999a). Questioning illuminates the structure of the traditional activity, providing information regarding the regulation of social order in school and the frequency and type of interpersonal conflicts. Such an endeavour benefits from the collection of several sources of data. These were 'Checkpoints' (Forum on

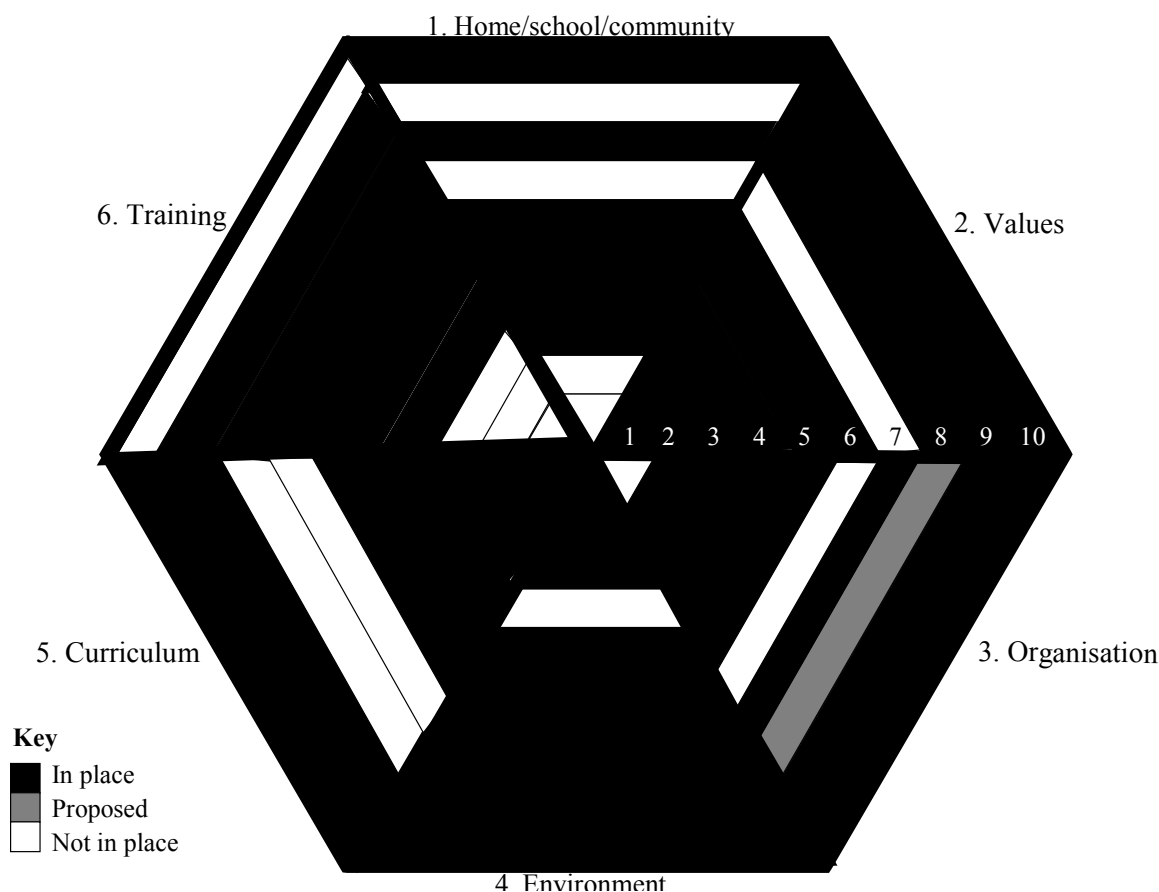
Children and Violence 1999 and appendix 1a), a questionnaire of school organisation and pedagogic practice (Markham 1999 and appendix 1b) and pupil interviews about their experiences of conflict (appendices 2 and 3a).

*a) Checkpoints*

‘Checkpoints’ (Forum on Children and Violence 1999 and appendix 1a) provides a comprehensive questionnaire relating matters of whole school organisation, teaching and relationships to the promotion of non-violence. It provides six checkpoints, each containing ten recommendations, which schools can indicate are or in place, proposed or not in place. The checkpoints are:

1. Home, school and community.
2. Values.
3. Organisation.
4. Environment.
5. Curriculum.
6. Training.

There is also a blank seventh category, ‘other school initiatives’, which can be used if so wished. The recommendations made under each checkpoint are derived directly from the Gulbenkian Report (1995). Both this report and ‘Checkpoints’ were written and devised by a number of prominent researchers of bullying and violence in schools. Many of the issues they identified were included in a review of literature contained in chapter two of this thesis. Whether each recommendation is in place, proposed or not in place can be visually recorded on a hexagonal map composing all the checkpoints to provide a visual indication of the degree to which schools promote non-violence. A Checkpoints survey was completed by the headteacher of the selected school, shown in figure 7.1.



**Figure 7.1: Checkpoints in place/proposed/not in place**

Figure 7.1 shows that many of the Forum on Children and Violence's (1999) recommendations were in place when the questionnaire was administered. Upon review, the questionnaire data suggests that values of non-violence permeate aspects of the school's organisation, values and relationships. Only in a few instances are recommendations not in place. These are communication of non-violence to the wider community (checkpoints 1.1, 1.2, 1.7 and 1.9), accurate use of terminology related to violence (checkpoint 2.7), funding for anti-violence initiatives (3.1), staff induction on anti-violence (3.6), education about media influence (5.7), pupils awareness of support agencies (5.8) and some aspects of staff training (6.1, 6.2, 6.3 and 6.10) (Forum on Children and Violence 1999, appendix 1a). One other recommendation notably not in place was checkpoint 4.7, concerning outside spaces. Although, all the other

‘environmental’ checkpoints are in place, the outside spaces lack designated social spaces, shelter and secure places for vehicles. This reinforces the observation made by OfSTED in 1998 about the inadequacy of outside spaces. The front playground was still bare, half of which was used as a car park even though pedestrian and vehicle access have since been segregated.

*b) School organisation and pedagogic practice*

To map the school’s organisation and pedagogic practice in greater detail, a questionnaire (Markham 1999 and appendix 1b) was also completed by the headteacher. This was derived from Daniels et al (1996) and based on Bernstein’s concepts of strong/weak classification and framing (Bernstein 2000) previously discussed. Answers to its 26 questions provide data, which can be interpreted in relation to these concepts.

Question 2, for example, concerns the degree of demarcation between managerial positions within the school, which is an issue of classification. The answers are on a scale of 1-5, with ‘all managerial positions have clearly stated responsibilities’ in answer ‘1’ indicative of strong classification and ‘no clear... responsibilities’ in answer ‘5’ indicative of weak classification. Question 26, as another example, asks how would a school respond to the discovery of a Year 6 pupil carrying illegal drugs for the first time, which is an issue of framing. The first tick box, ‘the pupil would be automatically permanently excluded’ would be indicative of strong framing. The fourth tick box, ‘the school would not exclude a pupil if it was the first time but would apply other sanctions’ would be indicative of weaker framing. The reason for asking the headteacher to complete this questionnaire was to ascertain how principles of power and control at the school are translated into matters of school organisation and communicational discourse. Many of these aspects may have a bearing on existing approaches to conflict resolution in school, which may have an impact upon the likelihood of peer mediation being sustained after the initial training.

Bernstein's (2000) concepts of classification and framing can be applied at a number of levels of analysis and to a number of activities in school. Clearly, a number of the questions included in the questionnaire are not directly relevant to the research question and some of its pedagogical questions have restricted value. For example, schools' abilities to regulate aspects of their practice for themselves have been constrained by the centralisation of key pedagogical decisions in recent years. This is particularly the case regarding what constitutes an appropriate curriculum. The questionnaire was completed when the content and delivery of much of the core curriculum was state-controlled and before any education about conflict resolution became mandatory with the establishment of Citizenship as a National Curriculum subject.

However, a number of questions (e.g. those concerned with discipline and behaviour management) are directly relevant to the research question. For example, whether a school has an authoritarian regulation of school uniform (question 25) is likely to affect frequencies of teacher-pupil conflict and responses to such transgressions. Answers to such questions give some understanding of how approaches to conflict resolution are regulated at the school at that time. Other factors, such as teacher cooperation and how aspects of the non-core curriculum and relationships are classified and framed create a general picture of how power and control may be exercised at a school and its impact on how tools to regulate conflict are produced and distributed.

Answers to the questionnaire are summarised in the remainder of this section. The summary uses categories from Daniels et al's (1996) framework for interpreting the questionnaire. Journal notes and photographs taken during the investigation and consultation of policy documents supplement these data.

**Social regulation, uniform and dress:** the school has a uniform and a rule on no jewellery, which is adhered to by most pupils.

The (non-core) curriculum: There is weak insulation between curriculum subjects, characterised by a large degree of cross-curricular work outside the National Literacy and

Numeracy hours. Hence development is seen as an integrated matter. There is an emphasis on promoting pastoral care, delivered by a programme called ‘You Can Do It!’ This approach posits that ‘habits of the mind’ underpin learning and achievement. These are built on the foundations of individual qualities of organisation, persistence, confidence and getting along with others. Delivery of this programme already incorporates an element of education about conflict resolution.

**Discipline:** High standards of behaviour are expected. Stickers are used to praise and reward good behaviour. Codes of conduct are on display in each classroom and the playground. If a pupil is not acting in accordance with this code of conduct a member of staff reprimands them. There are incremental levels of sanctions, which include being spoken to by a senior member of staff and loss of privileges. At the time of intervention a staffed ‘time-out’ facility was run at lunchtimes.



**Figure 7.2: Playground rules**

The code of conduct displayed in the playground (figure 7.2) sets out a clear approach to conflict resolution, ‘walk away from trouble, go to a grown-up’. Avoidance is

recommended as the ‘approved’ conflict resolution strategy. Pupils are educated to a degree about conflict resolution (checkpoint five) but are discouraged from taking an active role in the process. If conflict occurs, the playground rules set out a clear division of labour; it is an adult’s responsibility to resolve/arbitrate the conflict (Cohen 1995). The traditional activity is underpinned by strong classification and framing.

**Reception and ‘atmosphere’:** The interior of the school is pleasant and secure. The corridors are used to display a diversity of work. Much of this space is used to display posters related to their pastoral programme. The posters are colourful, have large bold text and include slogans such as ‘smiles are contagious’ and ‘attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference!’

**Decision-making:** Although the senior management team has a privileged say, decision-making is characterised by an integrated management and there is an emphasis on team planning.

Deducing concepts of strong/weak classification from some of this information is difficult as the data contains inconsistencies. Hence, it is necessary to set some parameters in which to apply Bernstein’s (2000) concepts. Regarding approaches to conflict resolution, the division of labour between staff and pupils is clearly vertical. They control the conflict resolution process. The regulation of social relations between teachers and pupils (‘go to a grown up’, figure 7.2) and between older and smaller children (‘stay in your playground’, figure 7.2) indicates strong classification and framing. Although insulation between non-core curriculum subjects are quite weak, a number of strong framing devices exist that attempt to appeal to or impose a common ideology upon the delivery of a number of subjects, particularly PHSE. For example, most teachers reported including visual, auditory and kinaesthetic aspects in their teaching. The headteacher’s had organised such training and encouraged teachers to include these elements in their classroom practice. Another strong framing device was the ‘You Can Do It!’ approach to PHSE, which contained emotional development and child autonomy as educational goals but emphasised a teacher-modelled approach to



behaviour. This device had a strengthening effect on the classification of principles of power (division of labour) and framing of principles of control (rules) underpinning the traditional activity.

### *c) Pupil interviews*

Twenty-eight pupils were interviewed individually about their experiences of conflict. The sample constituted four children (2 male, 2 female) from each year-group. Each classteacher was asked to select four 'typical' pupils from their class. Typical in this context meant pupils, who were not especially compliant or 'challenging'. Thus, an account of a typical pupil's experience of conflict could be gained, at least in accordance with the teachers' selections.

Aware of the difficulties of interviewing children (Cohen and Manion 1994), no prior interview schedule was used. Instead, seven cartoons of conflict were used to stimulate discussion, shown in appendix 2. These were based on Faber and Mazlish's (1999) idea of using pictures to engage the cooperation and dialogue of young children. The cartoons depict interpersonal conflicts, which pupils may commonly experience: being told off by an adult, being bullied, issues of friendship, an argument, being teased, a fight and a dispute over a resource (derived from Higgins and Priest 1990). Pupils interviewed may or may not interpret these adult representations of conflict as such but the approach allows related issues to be explored without using language that young children may find difficult to understand.

From this selection of cartoons, pupils were asked to choose the conflict they experienced most often and invited to talk about it in greater detail. During conversation, key aspects of their description were charted on a matrix (appendix 3a), which recorded who the conflict was with, where and when it took place, what it was about, what actually happened, any associated feelings and how it was resolved. These parameters are derived from commonalties of interpersonal conflict suggested by Cohen (1995). These characteristics were used as a checklist to obtain a minimum of information from the

pupil interviews without dictating an agenda, a process influenced by hierarchical focusing (Tomlinson 1995). If any information was not openly disclosed, open-ended questions were asked to probe further. This approach to interviews allows participants to share their experiences with minimal imposition from the researcher. Each interview was tape-recorded and reviewed later to check the matrices had been completed accurately. The information was re-read, answers tallied and then entered into an electronic database. This process can be described as first level coding (Miles and Huberman 1994). For example, the locations of pupil's conflicts were all recorded and frequencies kept when something was said more than once.

The type of conflict was straight forward to record because this was based on the card chosen. Similarly, the location of conflict was straightforward to record because answers were dominated by one response ('the playground') and the others did not vary much. Frequencies of their chosen conflict card were recorded as daily, more than once weekly, weekly and less than weekly. Some answers were grouped together because they were very similar, a process of pattern coding (Miles and Huberman 1994, Seale and Kelly 1998). For example, being told off by a teacher and being told off by a lunchtime supervisor were coded as conflict resolved by adult arbitration. Percentages were then calculated for each aspect of the matrix, representing types of response as a fraction of the total number of responses. This calculation was repeated to specify percentages by age (infant or junior) and sex (male or female).

Frequencies from the 28 interviews resulted in the following data:

- The type of conflict most frequently experienced by pupils was an argument (38%), followed by being teased (19%), fighting (18%), issues of friendship (17%), dispute over a resource (4%) and being shouted at (4%). More males complained about being teased and fighting. More females cited arguments as their most common conflict. Types of conflict were quite evenly distributed between juniors and infants with the exception of arguments being more common with juniors and issues of friendship with infants.

- The majority (52%) reported that the type of conflict selected was less than a weekly occurrence. It was an everyday experiences for 7%, a greater than weekly occurrence for 15% and a weekly occurrence for 26%. There were no key differences between the key stages but all pupils reporting conflict as an everyday occurrence were male. This meant that for 2 out of 14 'typical' boys interviewed, their chosen conflict happened every day. Literature (e.g. Collier 1995) has suggested conflict involving boys tends to be more physical than mental, which would have been emphasised by the interview procedure. The choice of conflict cartoons included more choices of physical conflict (e.g. fighting) than mental (e.g. teasing), so there may have been a gender interaction with the interview process.
- Significantly, 81% of conflict occurred on the playground, 15% in the classroom and 4% in the school hall. This suggests that the playground is an arena for conflicts. The inadequacy of outside spaces already discussed may be a factor (OfSTED 1998, Checkpoint 4.7) but it is more likely that the reduced surveillance and different types of activity that characterise school playgrounds allows pupils greater freedom to enact conflicts.
- Most of these conflicts (37%) were resolved by adult arbitration, followed by negotiation (30%) and avoidance (26%) whilst 7% were left unresolved. Juniors preferred avoidance and males were arbitrated more often than females.
- An overwhelming proportion of pupils (83%) cited 'making' friends as their desired conflict resolution strategy, 7% identified a need to change their behaviour, 6% preferred adult arbitration and 4% wanted to avoid conflict. There was no significant variation between the sexes or key stages.

The composite of these sources of data provides an account of rudimentary behaviour (Engestrom 1999a), identifying how the traditional activity is currently structured. Important issues identified during the questioning phase are that for the majority of pupils, conflict occurred on the playground, and 70% of these conflicts were resolved by adults, avoided or not resolved at all. This was hardly consistent with the school's 'You

Can Do It' approach to social and emotional development. Adults arbitrated over one third of pupils' conflicts. The division of labour for resolving 'difficult' conflicts was characterised by strong classification. There was clear distinction between the roles adults and pupils assumed in this process. Although the school appears committed to promoting principles of non-violence and developing pupils' life skills, the process of conflict resolution was explicitly controlled/modelled by teachers, indicative of strong framing. Hence, the communication produced (e.g. 'walk away... go to a grown up') gave pupils few opportunities to acquire and practice conflict resolution skills for themselves.

### **7.3 Analysing**

The second phase of an expansive learning approach to research (Engestrom 1999b) is analysing. This phase seeks to explain the empirical nature of the traditional activity and its historical development. It is characterised by asking why questions and mapping the contradictions of an activity system, their causes and historicity. In doing so, historical behaviour is reconstructed, as advocated by Scribner (Engestrom 1999a). Examination of the structure of the traditional activity is essential to understanding how its underpinning principles of power and control may or may not enable or constrain implementation of an alternative model of activity.

To analyse the traditional activity, the entire teaching staff of the school met to discuss the relationship between school organisation, the activity of conflict resolution and its historicity. All 21 members of teaching staff, including the headteacher and classroom assistants attended the meeting. The presentation of data from the previous section was reserved for the next phase. This was so the staff's analysis was not prejudiced by these data. The discussion was tape recorded and later transcribed verbatim. The meeting is reported here in summary of that transcription.

The staff meeting took the following format, lasting 1½ hours:

- Outline of the research project.
- Introduction to the activity system.
- ‘Brainstorm’ of conflicts occurring at the school, including analysis of their type, frequency, location, history and resolution.

The group brainstorm generated a list of conflicts, which were organised into a table, with the different types of conflict from sections 5.2.2 to 5.2.5 used as column headings. Figure 7.3 shows the actual brainstorm created in the session and illustrates the variety of conflict experienced at the school.

<b>(Type I/II Conflict):</b> Clash of object-orientated actions	<b>(Type IIIa Conflict):</b> Object orientated action(s) versus rules	<b>(Type IIIb Conflict):</b> Object orientated action(s) versus community	<b>(Type IIIc Conflict):</b> Object orientated action(s) versus division of labour	<b>(Type IV Conflict):</b> Clash of traditional and innovative objects	<b>Issues about mediating artefacts</b>
Fights and confrontations.  Pinching/thumping.  Name-calling.  Bullying.	Rule breaking: e.g. hiding under the table, wearing jewellery.	Different expectations and experiences between the home and the school.  Social hierarchies.  Dominant culture versus sub-cultures.	Refusal of pupils to work.  Clash of roles or the objectives of schooling (e.g. pastoral versus the academic).	Dissonance between ideas and alternative points of view.  Imposed versus intuitive teaching methods.	Language used: e.g. being cheeky, racism, verbal provocation.  Inability of pupils to articulate and reason their behaviour.

**Figure 7.3: Staff brainstorm of conflicts**

In considering the relationships between school organisation, the activity of conflict resolution and its historicity, the discussion following the production of the brainstorm made much of the skills, attitudes and values pupils brought into school from their homes and communities and how teachers responded to these. Causation was firmly rooted in

the child and their ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu and Passeron 2000). Staff members viewed the school’s responsibility as providing means of developing and modelling appropriate and compensatory skills, such as thinking through actions carefully.

After the production of the brainstorm, the staff were divided into groups and asked to analyse each conflict, its history and causes. In feedback, each group mentioned the differences between home and school cultures. Examples from their analyses include,

“they don't get any conflict resolution at all at home and we see it in their parents, when we talk to them they get aggressive, and you hear them speaking on the playground and that comes into school.”

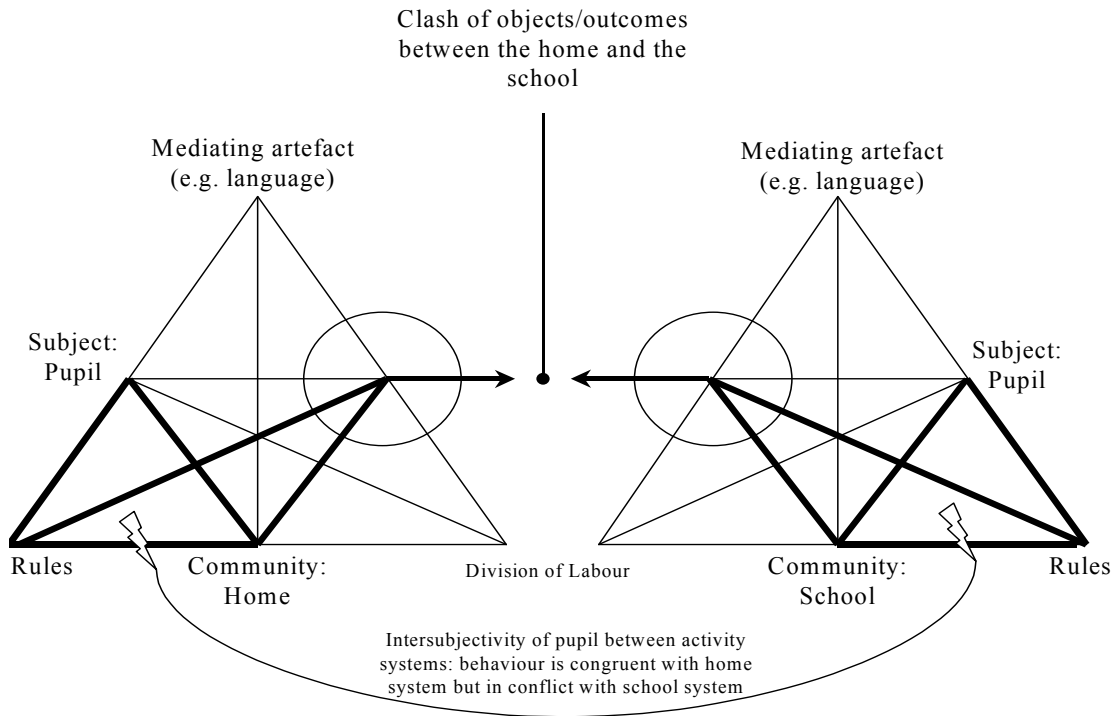
(Group 1)

Another group reported back,

“you get conflicting messages from parents, you can be talking about a child's aggressive behaviour and the mother will say 'I believe it' but father says 'get in there first, hit back' and its what he says that goes.”

(Group 2)

These observations suggest pupils belong to and move between multiple activity systems. In their analysis, the teachers distinguished between activities at home and school. Pupils acquire conflict resolution and other social skills in the home and wider community, which are underpinned by different principles of power and control to those inside school. Similarities to Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, capital and field (section 3.3.2) are not unnoticed. The school represents a ‘field’, where behaviour is evaluated and each pupil’s home background represents the greatest contributor to their habitus. Capital is then the knowledge, skills and attitudes drawn upon in both systems but to contrasting assessment criteria. For example, acting in accordance with the rules and norms of one system may result in conflict when transposed to another, (Bentley 1998), as illustrated in figure 7.4.



**Figure 7.4: Intersubjectivity of a pupil between two activity systems with different notions of rules**

Figure 7.4 suggests that the rules of home and school communities are uncoordinated. The principles of power and control underpinning activities in the home produce ways of thinking and acting that result in frequent conflict between pupils and the rules of the school. However, the teachers felt they were doing their best to deal with the issues presented by this incongruity but needed greater consistency in their approach. The headteacher commented (additions in brackets),

“The ‘You Can Do It’ programme challenges them (pupils) to re-think, sometimes we (teachers) model different situations and discuss alternative ways of doing it (conflict resolution).”

A classteacher added:

“We need staff to be incredibly consistent in their approach, not where one teacher will ignore something and another will use discipline, because children pick up on these mixed messages very quickly. So we need to be consistent and calm in every classroom. And using the staffroom as a release valve... because once you go out of that room its got to be modelled all the way”.

Thus, a picture of teaching as an ‘act’ was created, in which the perceived need to present pupils with alternative ways of managing conflict in contrast to their experiences outside school was translated into principles of communication. Staff members felt these principles of communication modelled conflict resolution to the pupils. This process required consistent language use by all members of staff, characteristic of a whole-school approach (Smith and Sharp 1994). The ‘You Can Do It’ programme was a framing device, which produced some consistency. In this approach, teachers controlled the process of reflection; there was no mention of pupils taking an active role in managing conflict for themselves.

In explaining how rudimentary behaviour came about, teachers attributed the antecedents of pupils’ aggressive approaches to conflict resolution to communicational deficiencies produced by social relations in the home and community. In response, teachers believed alternative social relations needed to be modelled to pupils by teachers. The approach was explicitly controlled by teachers and emphasised clearly defined boundaries between teachers and pupils, as arbitrators and disputants respectively. Hence, the traditional activity can be described as being underpinned by strong classification and framing (Bernstein 2000)

#### **7.4 Modelling/Interrogating**

Due to time constraints imposed by the selected school, the modelling and interrogating phases were undertaken in one staff meeting. The aim of this session was to consider the presentation of data so far collected and the merits and limitations of peer mediation as an alternative model of activity, in light of the issues identified in the data. Time was reserved towards the end of the meeting to examine and interrogate the new model of activity, before an action plan was agreed.



The session took the following format, lasting 2 hours:

- Presentation of data from previous two phases.
- Consideration of the merits and limitations of an alternative model of activity.
- Practicalities of implementing peer mediation.

The presentation of data included the key observations from section 7.2 and 7.3. Figure 7.4 was shown as a representation of the staff's view of causality. The presentation thus made the following two key points:

1. The playground is an arena for the vast majority of inter-pupil conflicts.
2. Pupils were not skilled in regulating their own conflicts. Teachers felt this was because of contrasting rules between the home and the school. The data suggests whereas this may be the case, pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to resolve their own conflicts.

The first observation was not contentious and in fact was a matter of the school's existing development plan. However, the second observation resulted in a number of dissident voices. These can be put into two groups. First, there was resistance to the assertion. Some voices felt that teachers' arbitration and communication included the modelling of conflict resolution skills.

“You said that 70% of pupil-pupil conflict was resolved by teacher arbitration. Well, part of that process is trying to encourage children to learn from that particular occasion to make a better choice so that they don't always get into that type of conflict. This takes a considerable amount of time, it's much easier to shout at a child and send them on their way but we go along that line in the hope that next time the choices will be better”.

(Headteacher)

This was a position, which defended the traditional activity and can be represented as a type IV conflict between traditional and innovative objects. Peer mediation constitutes an innovative object because it represents a new model of activity, which gives pupils greater responsibilities. The teachers recognised that greater pupil self-regulation would

be advantageous to both pupils' development of interpersonal skills and demands upon teachers' time. It was also acknowledged that any intervention planned would need someone to coordinate the service (Stacey and Robinson 1997) without making too many demands on their time and energy, a point reiterated by Galloway (2003).

Second, there were also staff members who were sceptical of pupil's abilities to mediate their peers' conflicts against staff members who had greater confidence in them. There was fear that the innovative activity required too much trust to be given to the pupils. A type IV conflict can be used to represent these issues (trust versus greater responsibilities), which raised further issues of division of labour. Initially, there was some resistance to the innovative activity, as this contribution highlights,

“Is this applicable to primary or secondary? Because I think that it overestimates the skills of our kids, I think you have got to think of the level of skills children can acquire when they are 9, 10 and 11 compared to what they will go on to acquire when they are older”.

(Teacher)

Despite these reservations, teachers acknowledged that conflict resolution skills are an important 'life-skill' and worthy of curriculum time. It was then decided to proceed and trial a peer mediation service. Interrogating the new model of activity raised two further issues: clients and practicalities. In considering the issue of clients, one teacher commented, “we need to think of a way of making sure that when the class goes that this is an ongoing thing”. Training pupils in Year 6 was dismissed because they would leave for secondary school within months of the training being completed, representing a poor investment. Another teacher suggested the Year 5 class, adding “the advantage of training Year 5 is that they have plenty of time to run the service in Year 6 and then you have a cohort to demonstrate and help train the next class of pupils who will eventually replace them”, which was accepted.

Funding of £3,200 from CSV Education for Citizenship/Millennium Awards had already been secured for the project. This money was used to employ peer mediation trainers

from WMQPEP and commission promotional materials. After considering the practicalities of the intervention, the following action plan was devised:

- The class of Year 5 pupils were to receive 9, 1-hour training sessions in preliminary peer mediation skills.
- Volunteers from this class were to receive two additional full day's training in peer mediation skills.
- Year 3 and 4 classes were to receive 6 x 50-minute lessons in conflict resolution skills. These pupils were to be primed as clients for the peer mediation service.
- The peer mediation service was to be coordinated by one member of staff (the Year 5 classteacher), who will oversee its launch and promotion.

In summary of the modelling and interrogating phases, the merits and limitations of a new model of activity (peer mediation) were considered. In this process, a number of type IV conflicts were raised. Some of these were practical in nature, whereas others revealed issues of power and control. Several staff members were not convinced that pupils would be able to take a more active role in the activity of conflict resolution. How the peer mediation service was implemented is described in the next section.

## **7.5 Implementing**

In this and the final phase of an expansive learning approach to research, the new model of activity is implemented with the aim of deliberately provoking new behaviour in order that processes of transformation can be observed at first-hand (Engestrom 1999a, 1999b). The initial and additional training are described in detail in the following two sub-sections.

*a) Initial training*

Each Year 3, 4 and 5 session was planned and delivered by peer mediation trainers from WMQPEP, the classteacher and a classroom assistant. Each of the Year 5 training sessions and one Year 3 and 4 session involved researcher observation-participation. For purposes of practical observation, the following description and analysis focus on the training delivered to the Year 5 class. Field notes on each session were made immediately after in a journal. The nine sessions took the following format.

1. Introduction to the aims of the project.
2. Development of a group contract.
3. Review of group contract and individual target setting.
4. Co-operative games.
5. Listening exercises.
6. Developing a feelings vocabulary.
7. The effect of actions on feelings.
8. Analysis of conflicts.
9. Constructive resolutions to conflict.

The development of this programme was influenced by a number of educationalists who have emphasised the importance of balancing programme contents and processes (e.g. Hicks 1986, 1999, Katz and Lawyer 1993, 1994). Thus, pupils received both instruction and experienced activities that aimed to develop knowledge, skills and values about conflict resolution. Each of these sessions was delivered via circle time (Lang 1998, Mosley 1993, 1996, Moss and Wilson 1998) introduced and described in section 2.4.5a. In summary, circle time involves the whole class sitting in a circle of chairs in a space created by the removal of tables and traditional classroom instruments. This creates an environment suitable for a number of activities and group discussion. At any time, everybody can see each other in the circle.

To describe each session's activities in detail would be verbose. Instead, the sessions can be characterised by a number of themes and approaches, which ran across the training. These groupings are derived from the training manuals (Cohen 1995, Macbeth and Fine 1995, Mediation UK 1998, Rawlings 1996, Stacey and Robinson 1997, Whitehouse and Pudney 1996) used during the training and are supported by field notes. Each is briefly discussed.

**Affirmation, communication and cooperation:** the training operated on the assumption that a problem solving approach to conflict is underpinned by the qualities of affirming others and self, effective communication and cooperation (Perkins 1989, Rawlings 1996) as depicted by the 'iceberg principle' (figure 2.7) discussed in extensive detail in chapter two. Typically, each session combined activities in each, although there may have been a focus on a particular aspect.

**Attention to group dynamics:** the training progressed with awareness of how groups develop (Tuckmann 1965, see also Stanford 1990 and Morris 1999). Theories of group dynamics suggest that a group progress through five stages during its life together. These are 'forming', 'storming', 'norming', 'performing' and 'adjourning'. The forming stage is a time of low conflict as the group familiarises itself with its participants and the requirements and rules of the setting. Conflict increases as the group proceeds through a storming stage, where individuals test the rules and compete for social positions within the group. As these conflicts are resolved, the group enters a norming stage, where rules and roles are settled before a performing stage, during which, activities are engaged in productively. As formed relationships enter a departure stage, conflict may reprise as group members prepare for a farewell. It should be noted that if inappropriate norms are set, or the group never forms, conflict in the group will be consistently high, and it is unlikely that any effective training would take place.

The application of Tuckmann's (1965) theory suggests that for a group to work together effectively and in this case acquire peer mediation skills, they have to successfully negotiate a degree of 'storming'. A critique of the theory of group dynamics, contained

within a review of conflict theory by Easterbrook et al (1992) highlights the norms established through ‘storming’ are associated with a group coping with, rather than resolving conflict. Nonetheless, the theory provides trainers with a knowledge of how groups may develop. Hence, there is attention to the development of a group contract, which is designed and regulated by the pupils themselves. Here, pupils brainstormed and reviewed ideas for rules to be used by the group during the training. These were then used in the following sessions.

**Ownership of feelings and behaviour:** central to the development of the group and skills in self-regulation is encouraging pupils to take greater ownership of their own feelings and behaviour, including understanding of the relationships between the two. Thus, disruptions to training were greeted with questions rather than directions. This allows reflection of the effect of actions on group tasks (Morris 1999). A typical question would be, “what do you need to do for the activity to continue?” rather than the direction “be quiet!” Whether an activity succeeds is therefore indicative of the group’s development of autonomy.

Disruptions to activities were frequent in the early stages of training. This may have been as a result of the greater freedom given to pupils during these sessions and over-excitedness caused by some of the games played. Disruption decreased over time as the group developed, an observation shared by the classteacher during a later interview. He attributed his observation to the fact that being a peer mediator distinguished pupils from the rest of the school. Hence, pupils recognised the training was integral to achieving this goal and were highly committed.

**Purposeful language:** the training was characterised by attention to effective communication, attentive listening and specific modes of speech. Feelings and their relationships to conflict is a key part of the peer mediation process (Cohen 1995, Mediation UK 1998). Hence, there was an emphasis on extending vocabulary in this area and understanding the relationships between actions and language and their effect on others. The process drew pupils’ attention to the effect of blaming language on escalating

conflicts. Instead, attention was focused on articulating the goals, needs and feelings associated with conflict. One such exercise was training pupils to reframe the blaming language of ‘you’ statements (e.g. “you keep calling me names... you are a bully!”) into ‘I’ statements (Whitehouse and Pudney 1996). An example of an ‘I’ statement is: “I feel angry when you call me names because it upsets me. I would like you to stop calling me names”. The ‘I’ statement is more purposeful because it reports feelings accurately and tells a disputant what to do in the future rather than what they may have done in the past (Cohen 1995).

*b) Additional training and setting up*

After the nine preliminary training sessions, volunteers were asked to participate in two additional days training in actual peer mediation skills. As the peer mediation service was intended for lunchtimes and involved the commitment of spare time, pupils had to volunteer. Although seven of the twenty-five pupils who had so far participated did not wish to be peer mediators, all expressed a wish to have the training. The training days incorporated elements already described, with an emphasis on practising peer mediation and what to do in problem situations.

The process of peer mediation has four distinct stages, these are: 1) setting the scene, explaining the process and agreeing to the ground rules, 2) hearing both sides of the story with an emphasis on how each person is feeling, 3) generating possible solutions to the dispute and 4) an agreement (Cohen 1995). These are set out in a script used by pairs of peer mediators, shown in appendix 4. Much of the training involved practising using the script in a variety of situations.



**Figure 7.5a: Peer mediator caps**



**Figure 7.5b: Peer mediators on patrol**



**Figure 7.5c: Peer mediation in process**

After the training, a rotor of peer mediators was drawn up by the Year 5 classteacher. In order to identify peer mediators on the playground easily they wore red caps (figure 7.5a) and two peer mediators patrolled both the infant and junior playgrounds (figure 7.5b). If their services were required, they escorted disputants into the main building, where two other pupils would take them through the process (figure 7.5c). A member of staff was situated in the room next door to where peer mediation took place in case a conflict escalated. A log of peer mediation was kept detailing the nature of the conflict and the agreement, which is signed by both disputants. The photographs in figures 7.5a-c were taken one month after the service had commenced. Having described the implementation of the new model of activity; processes of transformation and its impact are the topic of a further phase of questioning in the next section.



## **7.6 Further questioning of the new model of activity**

The purpose of the final phase of an expansive learning approach to research (Engestrom 1999b) is to explain the processes and outcomes of implementing the innovative activity (peer mediation) upon types of conflict experienced by individuals at the school. This is an important phase of the analysis because it allows interrogation of the nature of a type IV conflict between a traditional and innovative object and its resolution. How such resolution may or may not have resulted in the transformation of the traditional activity completes a conflict cycle, modelled in figure 5.6. Analysis of the intervention using codes related to the key concepts of CHAT identified a number of findings, which can be used for cross-institutional analysis in the next chapter.

To account for the qualitative impact of the peer mediation service, the 28 pupils interviewed in the questioning phase were interviewed again alongside all the pupils from the Year 5 class trained as peer mediators. These were accompanied by interviews with the training provider, the headteacher, each of the three classteachers directly involved with the intervention, the Year 5 classroom assistant, a lunchtime supervisor and two parents. The aim of these interviews was to gain a multitude of perspectives on processes of transformation. These include whether and how the traditional activity had been transformed, how this process could be explained using key concepts from CHAT and elaboration of the theory within this thesis, and whether the new model of activity had any impact upon types of conflict experienced by individuals, if it had been sustained. If it had not been sustained or was not going to be in the future, the same questions would illuminate processes that constrained the implementation of the new model of activity. Interview schedules, using open-ended questions were designed and used (shown in appendices 3b-e). The questions covered a number of areas:

- **Changes in experiences of conflict (for pupils already interviewed):** These questions elicited information regarding whether the previously reported conflict had decreased in frequency and whether its type and resolution had changed.
- **Reflection upon the training:** Participants were asked to describe their most and least enjoyable aspects of the training and whether pupil and teacher behaviour differed during these sessions. The purpose of these questions was to assess the differences between traditional and innovative activities. They were also asked whether individual or group behaviour had changed since the training. Professionals were asked directly how the pedagogy of the intervention compared to their own approaches and those encouraged by the school.
- **Reflection upon the peer mediation service, its setting up, promotion and its impact:** Interviewees were asked about how the service had been used, their opinions of its utility and whether the service had changed their own approach to conflict and experiences of conflict at the school. This provided an indication of whether types of conflict and its resolution had been transformed as a result of the intervention.

Additionally,

- Members of staff were asked whether the service would be maintained, how and why. They were also asked if school procedures or policies had or would change as a result of the intervention, to assess whether the traditional object had been expanded.
- All participants were also asked what they thought of the supplementary quantitative data gathered and whether they agreed with the results. This allowed both subjective responses to the data and a means of data triangulation (Stake 1995).

Each interview, like the preceding staff sessions and pupil interviews, was tape-recorded and fully transcribed (Miles and Huberman 1994, Seale and Kelly 1998, Strauss and Corbin 1990, Tonkiss 1998 and Silverman 1998).

At this stage, the data was then stored in Nudist Nvivo, a computer package for storing, managing, coding and modelling qualitative data. Nvivo allows numerous documents to be stored as one project. Each document can then be retrieved by researchers to summarise segments and identify patterns across the data, processes referred to earlier as first level coding and pattern coding by Miles and Huberman (1994). These codes are tagged by Nvivo as 'nodes', providing electronic links between codes across documents. These nodes can then be sorted and presented within their surrounding text in juxtaposition to each other with their original location clearly stated. This powerful search mechanism allows a researcher to quickly view data that has been coded in a certain way and the frequency of its appearance in the data. Nvivo does not do the coding by itself and this still has to be done thoughtfully by the researcher (Seale and Kelly 1998).

Miles and Huberman (1994) advocate creating a start list of codes, closely related to the conceptual framework of the research, to complete first level coding. Concepts from CHAT (e.g. tools, rules, division of labour etc), Bernstein's (2000) theory of cultural transmission (e.g. classification and framing) and conflict theory were used as a start list for coding interview data. Subsequent reading of the interview data can then refine these codes as patterns are identified. For example, a segment can initially be coded as 'division of labour' and later recoded as 'shift in division of labour' as this pattern is identified.

The premise of coding is that the more frequently a point is made the more significant a pattern is likely to be. Seale and Kelly (1998) state that reassurance can be given to the reader by providing the frequency of similar comments. However, such a premise is criticised by Charmaz (1995) who argues that the most frequent comments are not necessarily the most important. In fact research, should proceed with sensitivity to the insights of interviewees' and unexpected data. Seale and Kelly (1998) acknowledge that as data is coded, new codes will be needed for data that does not fit easily into existing patterns and some codes will develop sub-codes or branches. In the coding of data in this study, both strategies were employed. Examples of coding processes are shown forthwith.

These are illustrations; full transcripts are not included in the text or appendices because of their length. The interview, these extracts were taken from was nearly eight thousand words in length.

R: Has the intervention had any impact upon playground	1	
behaviour?	2	
T1: Playground behaviour fluctuates, it depends a lot on	3	
circumstances, what lessons they've had but the playground	4	
ladies have noted the fact that dinnertimes seem easier because	5	] outcome
they're not having to deal with the small problems, they're	6	
going to peer mediation. There now able to spend more time	7	] object expansion ]
with the deeper problems that peer mediation doesn't deal with.	8	
Because they were spending a lot of time dealing with the little	9	] division of labour ]
squabbles, 'somebody's nicked my drink and I want it back and	10	
they've drunk it', and so that now goes into peer mediation and	11	
I think its enabled them to focus more on the behaviours they	12	] potential shift of conflict from type I to IV
need to deal with and that's what's helped more than anything	13	
in the behaviour does seem to have calmed and the dinner ladies	14	] outcome
do seem calmer with the children...	15	

In the extract from a teacher interview above, examples are given of how the concepts of CHAT and the writer's own model building are used to code the data. Lines 4-6 and 13-15 describe an outcome of the intervention: 'quieter/calmer dinnertimes'. Lines 6-7 suggest this could be a process of object expansion as the teacher describes conflicts that were previously arbitrated are now going to peer mediation, a new model of activity. Lines 7-8 indicate an affect on the division of labour at the school, pupils are now managing 'smaller' conflicts amongst themselves and more time for arbitrating serious conflicts has been reserved for the 'dinner ladies'. Lines 9-11 suggest a potential shift from behavioural-interactional conflicts (type I) to a conceptual process characterised by peer mediation (type IV conflict). These comments describe some significant processes, however the reader will be more convinced by the research if these comments are supported by those made by other participants (Seale and Kelly 1998).

Comparison between processes observed during stages one and two of the empirical research design is assisted by Nvivo. The programme allows data to be stored on each interviewee, forming the parameters for controlled searches. Each interviewee had

attributes such as their age, sex and school stored, which was useful in sorting and contrasting accounts. Whereas pattern coding can be illuminative, Charmaz (1995) reminds researchers of the need to remain sensitive to unexpected data. An example of how this argument informed coding is shown next.

R: How has the peer mediation service been promoted and maintained?	16	
	17	
T1: It was initially promoted in an assembly with a presentation I did with key stage two, we explained what peer mediation was and then we showed them the posters and the caps, we explained who it was for and what it was for because obviously there are certain things that we didn't want taken to peer mediation...	18	] <i>high profile</i> ] division of labour ]
	19	
	20	
	21	
	22	/trust
R: How is it maintained?	23	
T1: It's been maintained by the pupils themselves. It's a very independent process, the children know exactly where to go and what to do. I made sure for the first few weeks that it was off and running because we were on a two week rotor by the end of the second week they were all sorted and do maintain it themselves. They deal with everything, it's running itself.	24	] division of labour ]
	25	
	26	
	27	
	28	
	29	

In the extract above, lines 18-20 state that the intervention was supported by the use of a number of advertising strategies produced by the school. Whereas this isn't a novel insight, as Sharp and Thompson (1994) describe the need for such an approach, it reminds researchers that their analysis needs to remain open to processes beyond those easily coded by the use of CHAT concepts alone. The comments in lines 18-20 identify that the tools used to promote the intervention need to be 'high profile', which is more specific than coding the lines as 'tool'. Lines 24-29 describe further issues of division of labour but whereas lines 20-22 relate to a similar code, it is difficult to accommodate them within the existing code as issues of power and trust are introduced. Although the teacher partially endorses the new model of activity, there is still an unwillingness to trust the pupils to handle more serious conflicts. This is not surprising as the second staff meeting (section 7.4) exposed similar views pre-intervention.

In addition to interview data, the opportunity was taken to supplement these data with a number of quantitative outcome measures. Those trained as peer mediators completed

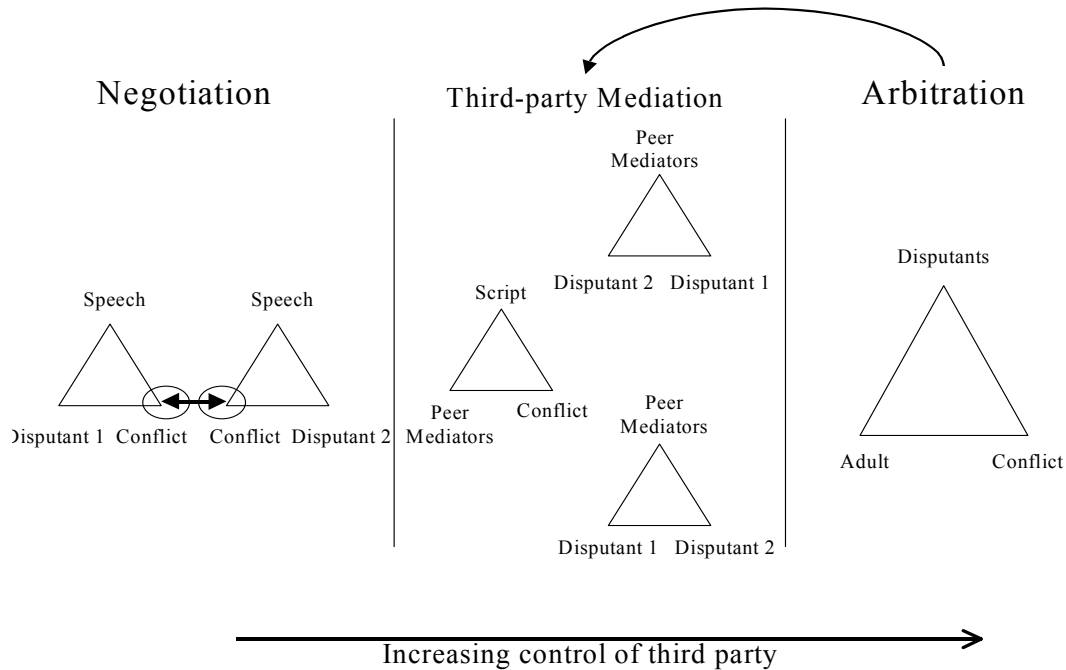
self-esteem and loci-of-control questionnaires (Maines and Robinson 1998) before during, and after peer mediation training. These measures were taken because the literature on peer mediation indicates gains in these areas for trainees (Johnson and Johnson 1996, Stacey 1996). The training also incorporated some input on affirmation, which may have had an effect on self-esteem. Measures of general aggression and bullying (Arora 1994, 1999) were also taken for each class directly involved in the intervention before, during and afterwards. The hope of taking these measures was to provide some indication of whether there had been any change in behavioural conflicts. The writer was aware of a number of inconsistencies in using such methods within a CHAT approach to research (Ratner 1997), which are discussed within the critical commentary at the end of this chapter.

Analysis of the interview data by the writer using the approaches previously outlined identified a number of themes, which are now presented. These themes are also used to contrast and inform the analysis of peer mediation services at other schools in the next chapter.

#### *7.6.1 Shift in division of labour*

The implementation of the new model of activity has resulted in a considerable shift in division of labour at the school, at least regarding the activity of resolving ‘minor’ conflicts. This can be characterised by two modes of transition. First, a greater degree of responsibility for pupils and second, third-party mediation as an alternative to the arbitration of conflicts by teachers. The innovative activity (peer mediation) is underpinned by principles of power and control in which pupils have a greater role in the regulation of their own and their peers’ conflicts. In contrast, the traditional activity (arbitration of conflicts by teachers) was underpinned by principles of teacher power and control. This shift in activity represents a translation of some teacher power to pupils, who use new cultural artefacts (e.g. the peer mediation script) to regulate themselves. Thus, when pupils encounter conflicts, which are difficult to resolve themselves through

negotiation, they now have an opportunity to a) attempt to sort the problem out for themselves and b) to ask peers to help them in this process rather than adults, as illustrated in figure 7.6.



**Figure 7.6: Shift from teacher arbitration to third-party mediation**

The practice of some teachers judging conflicts based on information provided to them via disputants was replaced, on occasions, by disputants resolving conflicts for themselves via peer mediation. Arbitration, negotiation and peer mediation in schools employ quite different artefacts, rules and practices with quite different roles for adults in each. In arbitration, classification and framing (Bernstein 2000) are strong. The relationships between subjects are clearly defined (arbitrator and arbitrated) and the structure of communication reveals the power of one to judge the other and administer appropriate punishment (Cohen 1995). In contrast, classification and framing in negotiation between equal parties is weak. The relationships between subjects are more horizontal and the structure of communication is orientated to achieving a compromise

(Katz and Lawyer 1993). Peer mediation represents a median between these contrasting approaches. The parties in peer mediation are horizontally related but have distinct roles. The framing device (the script) used by peer mediators sets out sequential steps in exploring the problem and generating potential solutions. This process is more formally controlled than in negotiation but less formally controlled than in arbitration (Cohen 1995). Thus, the implementation of the innovative activity i) weakens the classification of social relations between teachers and pupils as arbitration is de-formalised, and ii) strengthens the relations between some pupils by creating a division of labour in which pupils assume the roles of peer mediators and disputants. New rules are created that are underpinned by these new relations.

This shift from arbitration to peer mediation is also characteristic of a shift in conflict type from behavioural-interactional conflicts (type I) and behavioural-structural conflicts (type III) to conceptual conflicts (type IV) when negotiation is difficult. Arbitration places a pupil in direct confrontation with a teacher (type I conflict) or an element of activity such as a school rule (type III conflict). In peer mediation, such conflicts are given a future orientation and expressed as choices between alternative courses of action (type IV conflict). The school's philosophy of encouraging pupils to re-think aspects of their behaviour has now been extended by the intervention to include a facility for 're-thinking' provided by peers as well as by members of staff. The shift in division of labour corresponds to a number of other observations reported during interviews.

1. Teachers and lunchtime supervisors have observed the service has been popular with pupils, they believe this has something to do with pupil's perception of authority. One lunchtime supervisor commented that pupils see advice from peers as 'help' and advice from members of staff as 'lectures'. Pupils can volunteer to have minor conflicts mediated by peers without the threat of sanctions, as this pupil shares, "if we ask the teacher, one of us might be upset because one of us might get into trouble. With peer mediators, you know you're not going to get into trouble".



2. The shift in division of labour has meant minor conflicts are frequently prevented from escalating and members of staff have greater time free for arbitrating more serious conflicts. A lunchtime supervisor commented, “when problems are sorted out, it’s one less job for us to do, which means we can make better use of our time”. This observation was shared by a classteacher,

“dinnertimes seem easier because lunchtime supervisors are not having to deal with the small problems, they’re going to peer mediation. They are now able to spend more time with the deeper problems that peer mediation doesn’t deal with”.

(Year 5, classteacher)

Teachers regarded peer mediation as having limited utility for serious conflicts involving challenging pupils. This resurrected the tension between staff members who were and were not prepared to ‘trust’ pupils prior to intervention. Hence, the principles of power and control underpinning the activity of resolving ‘serious’ conflicts remained strongly classified and framed.

3. The peer mediators wore red caps (figure 7.5) to identify themselves on the playground, which according to the headteacher became a symbol of status, accompanied by gains in confidence amongst Year 5 pupils.
4. The pupils maintain the service themselves. Many of the peer mediators enjoy running the service and welcome it as something to do at lunchtimes other than getting bored. They take the service seriously. One pupil’s attitude equated the service with the world of work, “we’ve had a new boy and he’ll be a peer mediator hopefully, a spare one, we’ll train him up in Year 6, so if someone’s away we can slip him in on a spare shift”.
5. Many of the staff members have been surprised how well the peer mediators run the service but have suggested that some pupil’s skills are highly situated.
6. To sustain the service, the pupils will pass their skills onto replacement peer mediators before they leave the school at the end of Year 6. This form of ‘peer apprenticeship’ provides the trainees with even greater responsibilities.

### *7.6.2 Synergy between the principles of power and control underpinning traditional and innovative activities*

The processes described in the previous and following sections appear to have been enabled by a degree of synergy between traditional and innovative activities. The new model of activity must not meet too much resistance from teachers and cultural practices at the school, characterised by type III conflicts between the innovative activity and elements of the traditional activity under potential modification. Each of the teachers interviewed were asked to describe the similarities and differences between the intervention and their approach to resolving conflict, the school culture and other initiatives at the school. In their responses, teachers felt the innovative activity well matched the culture and philosophy of the school. One such example was the congruency between peer mediation and the school's 'You Can Do It' pastoral programme, as the headteacher describes:

“Peer mediation is getting them to re-think their behaviour, but its getting them to rethink it with a peer rather than an adult. In many ways peer mediation is the natural progression from the 'You Can Do It' approach of thinking things through, thinking about your thoughts and feelings and how that affects your behaviour and what different choices you could make and what different feelings you may have generated if you'd made a different choice”.

(Headteacher)

There are clear similarities between the 'You Can Do It' approach and the stages of the peer mediation script (appendix 4). This may have been instrumental in the support given to the implementation of the peer mediation service by the majority of the staff. Interviews with project workers state that the support of the headteacher and a 'critical mass' of whole-school staff are essential to the successful launch and maintenance of a peer mediation service, a notion often applied to the sustainability of other anti-bullying initiatives (e.g. Daniels et al 1998, Smith and Sharp 1994, Sharp and Thompson 1994).

However, there were areas of conflict between the innovative and traditional activities. The school operated a time-out facility at lunchtimes. This functioned within a punitive disciplinary framework, positing members of staff with the power to remove privileges (usually playtime) from pupils who had broken school rules. Two teachers interviewed felt 'time-out' was inconsistent with the innovative activity, which functioned within a restorative disciplinary framework to give pupils the opportunity to repair any harm done. According to these teachers, 'time-out' focused too much attention on negative behaviour whereas peer mediation was more congruent with their 're-thinking' philosophy. 'Time-out' was also regarded as having limited utility; it was not working as the same pupils were repeatedly being sanctioned. As a result, plans were made to eradicate the initiative. In this case, the innovative certainly replaced the traditional.

Another area of tension was between the responsibilities given to pupils by the innovative activity and teacher's perceptions of authority, which still underpinned more traditional approaches to conflict resolution, processes also noted in different studies by Griffith (1996) and Broadwood (2000). Peer mediators were only entrusted to facilitate the resolution of 'minor' conflicts. More serious conflicts were reserved for arbitration. Lunchtime supervisors were also concerned about issues of surveillance, appearing to favour a school reminiscent of the panopticon devised by Bentham (Foucault 1995). They felt uneasy about pupils being inside the school building, out of sight and unaccounted for. Similarly, teachers expressed the need for a member of staff to be close at hand, in case a conflict escalated during peer mediation. The tension between those who trusted pupils and those who were sceptical of their skills, described in the analysing phase of the expansive learning approach, was maintained. Thus, notions of adult power and control evident in historical organisation of the school's approach to conflict resolution continued to subvert the innovative activity despite all the teachers interviewed commenting about the maturity of the peer mediators in running the service.

### 7.6.3 *The production of a shared object*

In response to an open-ended question about the impact of the intervention on the class, 50% (n=18) of the pupils trained as peer mediators noted there had been a change in dynamics between their peers. Retrospectively, pupils described their class as individualistic and largely coordinated to academic goals. The peer mediation training (which included a lot of co-operative games) and the service subsequently implemented appears to have represented a shared object for the trainees, which united the class. As sequence A illustrates:

#### **Sequence A:**

Pupil: ...I've been able to get along with a lot more people now.

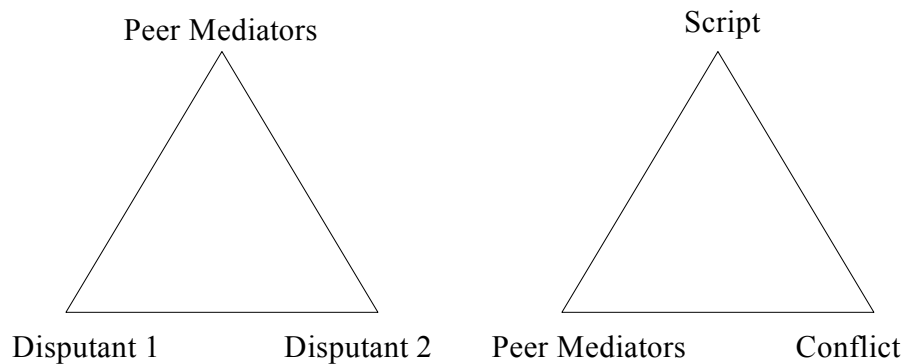
Researcher: What's changed?

Pupil: Because we've got something that we all do the same, because we're all peer mediators, so there's always something to talk about that we all know about. Instead of, I say something and they say, "Oh, that's boring."

The production of a shared object was so powerful that four pupils reported the gender divide in their class had largely been dismantled. Pupils related this change to the new model of activity by i) describing the need for a more mature approach to school life, given the extra responsibility they now had, and ii) the rotor system and nature of peer mediation meant they had to work successfully with different pupils frequently. Often peer mediation required pupils to work in pairs of mixed sex. The classteacher agreed with these observations, he described that participating in peer mediation training distinguished the class from the rest of the school. They felt special, more responsible and importantly more collective. As a result, the classteacher observed there was also greater cohesion and cooperation in the classroom, which was an unexpected but welcome dividend. Such transformation can be represented as a transition from coordination to communication (depicted in figure 4.10) for many of those trained as peer mediators.

#### 7.6.4 *The production of tools*

Analysis of interviews with those trained as peer mediators and their classteacher revealed evidence that they found the peer mediation script (appendix 4) a useful tool. The peer mediation script was introduced during the training days and is used each time disputants use the service. Figure 7.7 utilises Vygotsky's (1978) original model of mediated action (figure 4.1) to show that disputants (subject and object to each other) use trained peers as a mediational tool. Their peers in turn use the script as a mediational tool between themselves and the object: conflict, which allows the process to follow a structure from analysis of the conflict to the generation of alternative solutions and an agreement. As this is done, what may have been a behavioural-interactional (type I) conflict is reframed into a consideration of alternative objects, characteristic of a type IV conflict. In following the process, the problem becomes the object rather than each other (Stacey et al 1997).



**Figure 7.7: Peer mediation**

The communication that takes place during peer mediation is semi-scripted by a mediating artefact produced by the innovative activity. The text of such a script (appendix 4) includes consideration of how the other person might be feeling and a range of solutions to the problem from which to select a mutually satisfying outcome (Katz and Lawyer 1994). These processes are frequently absent from direct confrontation, typical of type I conflicts (Shantz and Shantz 1985). Matters that may have been previously arbitrated by teachers are subsequently resolved through peer mediation. The production of this new tool represents a translation of some teacher power to pupils who use this new cultural artefact (the peer mediation script) to regulate the activity of conflict resolution for themselves.

Internalising tools is part of the process of becoming an expert (Lave and Wenger 1999), in this case an accomplished peer mediator. However, some trainees discussed how they were beginning to use the script in other contexts. One such pupil described how she was beginning to use the script outside the formal setting of peer mediation.

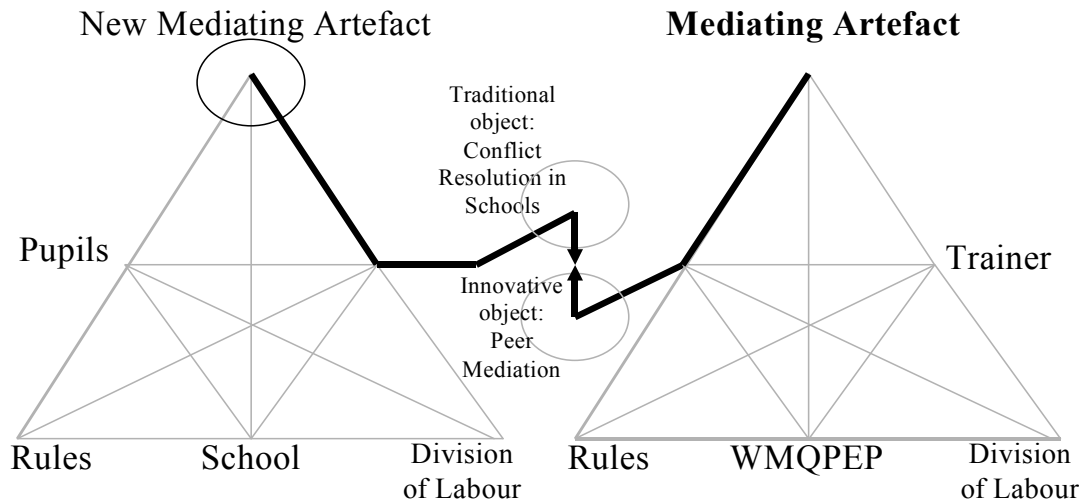
**Sequence B:**

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Researcher: | What kinds of conflict did you experience before being trained as a peer mediator?   |
| Pupil:      | Usually a lot of people arguing and shouting at each other and everybody else not knowing what to do, usually just standing in the background not knowing what to do so the fight would go on and get worse. |
| Researcher: | Would you have been one of those standing in the background?   |
| Pupil:      | Yes, because I wouldn't know what to do.   |
| Researcher: | And has that changed at all?   |
| Pupil:      | I'm now trying to sort out the problems before it gets too violent.  |
| Researcher: | How do you do that?  |
| Pupil:      | Well, I go in and ask them to calm down and ask them the different questions and try to make them see that its not what they think it is and   |

	that its different and then they should see that its not a fighting matter and should make friends.
Researcher:	And what questions do you use?
Pupil:	<u>I ask them what's happened and who's doing it with them if the others have gone off, and then we go and find them and ask them to explain what's happened, the other person explains what's happened and then think about the two things that they've said and then give them a few ideas and think about what to do next.</u>
Researcher:	Where do those questions come from?
Pupil:	The scripts, I use some of the words that are on the script.
Researcher:	When do you use those scripts?
Pupil:	When we're peer mediating at the moment, but we usually remember them and we use them outside as well.

The underlined segment in Sequence B outlines the stages of the peer mediation script, minus a question on feelings. It is possible that the pupil is using the voice of the script. Such acts of ventriloquism are well described by Bakhtin (1981) and Wertsch (1996). Her account suggests that many characteristics of this new tool have been internalised. By using the tool in new contexts, she is taking the first steps to externalisation (Vygotsky 1978). If her own account is accepted, the tool has shaped some of her thought processes but now she is beginning to use the tool to shape extraneous situations.

The relationship between innovative and traditional activities can be understood and depicted as the production and movement of new cultural artefacts (Engestrom and Miettinen 1999), as shown in figure 7.8. One such cultural artefact produced by WMQPEP is the peer mediation script. The production and reproduction of such tools completes a type IV conflict cycle (figure 5.6) between alternative models of activity, in which processes of social and individual transformation have taken place.



**Figure 7.8: The movement of a new mediating artefact**

The accounts of pupils and teachers presented in this section suggest that the innovative activity produced new forms of social relations, which involved the use of new cultural artefacts or tools such as the peer mediation script. The use of these new tools creates opportunities for new ways of thinking and acting. Sequence B showed how one pupil used the script to regulate her own thinking, speaking and acting in conflict situations. The innovative activity also produced tools that staff members found useful. The Year 3 and 4 classteachers referred to a number of other devices, such as ‘an anger thermometer’, which became part of their teaching practice. The clearest example of tool appropriation by a teacher came from the Year 5 classteacher. He described how he had appropriated the peer mediation script to regulate his own management of pupils experiencing a conflict. Talking about the impact of the intervention on his own practice, he stated:



“I think I am better now at talking with the children over a problem. I actually do use the peer mediation script when I'm dealing with two children. I don't read it out but I know the sorts of, the way to talk, to get one child saying something and then saying to the other and making more of a tennis match, if you like, between the two children. Whereas originally, I would have spoke individually to the one with them standing in front of me and individually to the other. Instead now, I'm more, we'll hear the one side, we'll hear the other side and then we'll hear what that person's going to do and what the other person's going to do instead of doing it in big blocks. And I think they've got that better now because they immediately hear how each other is feeling”.

(Year 5 classteacher)

Here again, the teacher admits to ventriloquising the stages of the peer mediation script but shows how he has made the tool serve his own ends. In this example, the tool used by the teacher in the traditional activity has been modified by the innovative activity. The use of this new tool shapes his consciousness. Yet, by making the tool subservient to his own intentions, the classteacher demonstrates mastery of the tool (Bakhtin 1981, Wertsch 1998). The teacher uses the new tool in a way that is reminiscent of the relationship between speech and tool use described by Vygotsky (1978). When subjects are presented with a difficult task, they retort to externalised speech and the use of semiotic tools to structure their speech. In this case, the teacher retorts to a mediational tool (the peer mediation script), which translates a certain set of social relations into principles of communication. In doing so, he imposes a plan onto the situation that steers dialogue along an expected trajectory towards a mutual agreement between disputants.

Such processes illuminate significant transformation of organisational and communicational practices, which may be critical to the implementation and sustainability of peer mediation services in schools. In an interview with an experienced peer mediation trainer, the interviewee recounted her experience at one school in which teachers criticised the training because they observed that pupils' skills were 'situated' (Brown et al 1989) and not being applied to contexts outside the activity of peer mediation. The interviewee also recounted how the same teachers would shout at their classes, sometimes immediately after a peer mediation training session. Hence, they did not transfer their skills either. At this school, both pupils and teachers reported

transferring their skills in ways that reproduced elements of the innovative activity. Some post-Vygotskian theorists (e.g. Mercer 2001, Moll, Tapia and Whitmore 1993) have highlighted the importance of such processes in ‘distributing’ new ways of thinking and acting.

Processes of reproduction and distribution were reported taking place at an institutional/activity level of analysis. The Year 5 teacher and the headteacher described how the peer mediation project will be integrated with the PHSE curriculum, and policies on the management of behaviour and lunchtimes. In doing so, the innovative activity is integrated into existing cultural practices, re-shaping elements of many of them. To sustain the service, a scheme of apprenticeship will be set up for older pupils to train younger replacements. This will be organised and delivered by the Year 5 classteacher rather than by professionals from WMQPEP. According to all the project workers interviewed about the sustainability of peer mediation services in schools and literature reviewed on the topic (e.g. Stacey et al 1997), schools need to take ownership and control of the training process to maintain the work beyond the life of the intervention.

#### *7.6.5 Supplementary quantitative measures of intervention outcomes*

Despite criticisms of evaluating interventions using numerate methods either side of an intervention outlined in chapter three, the writer decided to supplement the qualitative data gathered during interviews in this way for two reasons. First, to investigate whether claims made in the literature that peer mediation training results in gains in pupils’ self-esteem and a more internalised locus of control (e.g. Stacey 1996) would occur in this investigation. Second, to investigate whether intervention outcomes could be supported by any reduction in aggressive and violent incidents reported by pupils themselves.

Neither of these patterns can be supported by the quantitative data collected within stage one of the empirical research. This does not necessarily mean behaviour did not change, as interview data indicated clear patterns of transformation. Rather, it means that the data

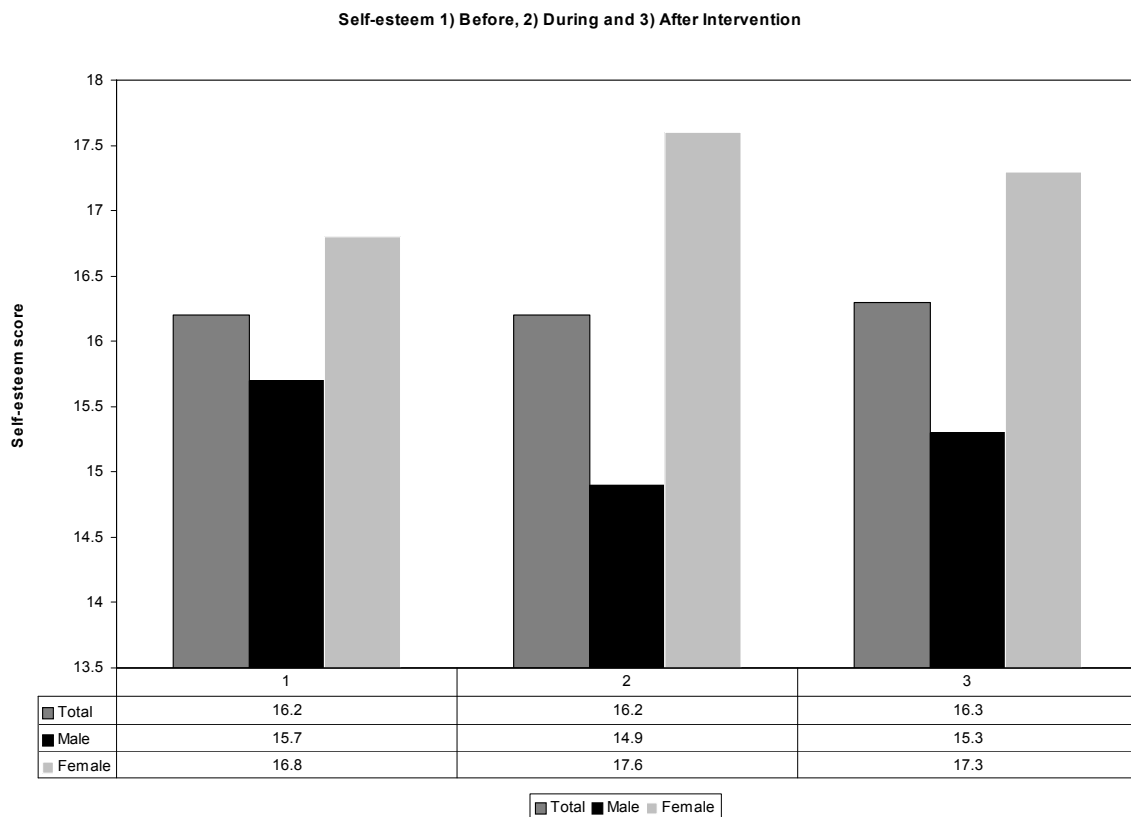
collection tools either measured a phenomenon unaffected by the intervention or measured a phenomenon potentially affected by intervention unreliably. A critique of the data collection tools used is contained with the critical commentary that concludes this chapter.

*a) Self-esteem and locus of control of those trained as peer mediators.*

Each pupil trained as a peer mediator completed a questionnaire to measure self-esteem and locus of control before, during and after the intervention. These measures were administered because the literature on peer mediation reports gains in these areas for peer mediation trainees (Johnson and Johnson 1996, Stacey 1996). The tool chosen for this task was the B-G Steem Questionnaire (Maines and Robinson 1998). This was chosen over alternatives because it had been reliably tested on large samples, was ‘child-friendly’ in comparison to others (e.g. Bitai 2000) and incorporated a locus of control element, which other research (e.g. Jackson and Martin 1998) has highlighted as developmentally more significant than self-esteem.

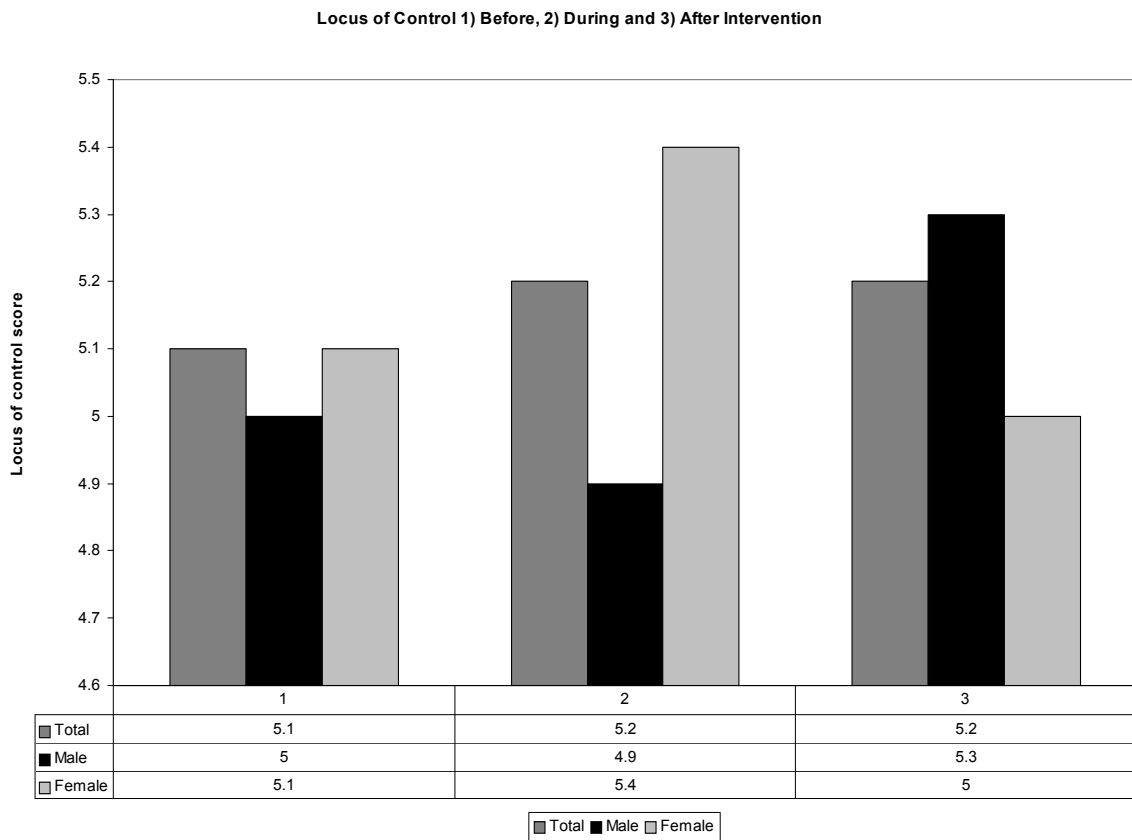
The B-G Steem questionnaire (Maines and Robinson 1998) asks primary pupils 27 questions (20 related to self-esteem, 7 related to locus of control), which can be answered yes or no. These are shown in appendix 5, indicating which answers score one point for which category. The answers to these questions can then be scored to give an indication of self-esteem and locus of control. An example of a question about self-esteem is question 6, ‘do children like playing with you?’ A ‘yes’ answer to this question would be recorded as 1 point. An example of a locus of control question is question 15, ‘do you choose your friends?’ Again, a ‘yes’ answer would be scored as 1 point. ‘Yes’ and ‘no’ answers were varied so that children had to think about their answers to each question. Self-esteem scores were out of 20. For this age group (9-11years), a score of 14-16 was ‘normal’ for boys and 14-17 for girls, in comparison to a national survey. Loci of control scores were out of 7. An average locus of control score for this age group is 4-5 for boys and 5 for girls. A lower score indicates an external locus of control and a higher score indicates an internal locus of control.

The questionnaires were administered to the class that received peer mediation training (Year 5) in their own classroom on a Friday afternoon, one week before, five weeks into the training and four weeks after the end of their training. Although the questionnaire was administered in examination conditions so that children were free to answer truthfully (Arora 1994), children were allowed to ask an adult to read and explain a question to them if it was incomprehensible. The teacher gave instructions beforehand and the first question was read aloud as an example. The data gathered from this exercise was entered into an electronic spreadsheet and mean averages for males, females and the whole class calculated. After the removal of one outlier (Kinnear and Gray 2000) and 5 pupils absent for one or more of the measures, mean averages of 19 pupils' self-esteem and loci of control were plotted over the intervention period. The intervention appears to have had no impact on either, with all scores remaining within a 'normal' category, as shown by the graph in figure 7.9.



**Figure 7.9: Self-esteem of Year 5 class before, during and after intervention**

Figure 7.9 shows the self-esteem of the total class remained constant. There were subtle differences between the sexes. Male self-esteem went down during training and had climbed again afterwards. Female self-esteem climbed during training but dipped slightly afterwards but remained higher than the initial measure. However, these variations are relatively minor as they all remain within a 'normal' category. There is a similar picture for locus of control.



**Figure 7.10: Loci of control of Year 5 class before, during and after intervention**

Figure 7.10 shows mean averages of loci of control for the class also remained constant over the intervention period. Similar to measures of self-esteem, measures of male loci of control dipped then climbed to a level higher than the initial measure. Measures of female loci of control climbed then dipped. No clear pattern of an interaction with the

intervention can be deduced from this data. The patterns observed informed questions included in the post-intervention interview schedules with pupils and teachers so their responses to the data could be gained. However, this exercise contributed little added value to the data other than the Year 5 classteacher confirming his own observation that self-esteem would have been unaffected by peer mediation training. During interview, the classteacher reported that several pupils' general behaviour (including their self-esteem) fluctuated over the intervention period. However, he attributed these fluctuations to circumstances affecting pupils that only encompassed school life. For example, one pupil's father was imprisoned whereas another pupil's home-life stabilised during the intervention period. Coopersmith (1981) makes a similar argument, citing family circumstances as the predominant factor in low or high self-esteem.

*b) General-aggression and bullying indices*

General-aggression and bullying indices (Arora 1994, 1999) were taken before, during and after the intervention by each Year 3, 4 and 5 class (more than 80 pupils per measure dependent on attendance at school that day) in the same conditions as with the administration of the B-G Steem Questionnaires. The sample who completed these indices represents both peer mediators and their clients. The reason for taking these measures was to quantify whether the intervention was associated with any reduction in children's self-reported experiences of repeated physical/mental violence (bullying) or isolated experiences of such violence (general aggression), characteristic of behavioural-interactional (type I) conflicts. Each pupil completed a 'life in school' checklist (Arora 1994) on the same day (Friday afternoon) one week before, five weeks into the training and four weeks after the intervention. The checklist outlines 40 positive and negative experiences, which may happen to a pupil within a week at school. These are shown in appendix 6.

As well as their age and sex, each pupil had to indicate whether each experience (e.g. 'kicked me') happened to them once, more than once or not at all during that week. Several of these questions (numbers 5, 9, 11, 25, 38, 40) indicate an experience of

violence/bullying. These can be tallied, from which indices can be calculated according to a formula set out in Arora (1994). To score the bullying index, the grand total number of ticks under the 'more than once' column for questions 5, 9, 11, 25, 38 and 40 are calculated and divided by the number of checklists completed. These six percentages are added and divided by 6; the result is given to two decimal places. To score the general aggression index the six percentages calculated from the bullying index are added to six percentages calculated by following the same procedure as before but for the grand total number of ticks recorded under the 'once' column. The total of these 12 percentages are divided by 12 to give the general aggression index, also given to two decimal places. These results indicate the percentage of school pupils reporting being bullied or experiencing an act of aggression in the preceding week. The results vary from school to school, for example the bullying index can vary from 8% to 50% in different schools (Arora 1999). They have not yet been conducted at enough schools to suggest an average figure.

The data gathered was again stored in an electronic spreadsheet so that the indices could easily be calculated. The indices collected for the three year-groups over the intervention period produced the following composite results.

	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3
Bullying Index	13%	13%	14%
General Aggression Index	13%	13%	15%

**Figure 7.11: Indices of bullying and general aggression**

The composite picture demonstrates that the intervention appears to have had no impact on actual experiences of behavioural-interactional (type I) conflicts recorded in this way. When analysed by sex, there was a decrease in female reports of bullying during the training period, compensated by an increase in male reports. There was no clear indication of why this pattern occurred based on the quantitative data collected alone. The limitations of these data collection methods are discussed in the critical commentary at

the end of this chapter. A number of ideas for this pattern were suggested by teachers when interviewed, these included fluctuations in behaviour over the intervention period and the possibility of a gender interaction with the training. Pupils may have also become more skilled at identifying conflict as a result of the intervention (Unwin and Osei 2000).

It cannot be assumed the frequency of conflicts remains constant over the school year. For example, Tuckmann's (1965) theory of group dynamics suggests that levels of conflict fluctuate with group development. It is very difficult to say whether the intervention had an impact or not on general aggression and bullying on this basis. For example, if levels of conflict increased over the year normally, then the intervention would have been very successful. The teachers interviewed felt the intervention itself was a component of school management practices. It would therefore be very difficult to isolate the impact of the intervention and credit it with any singular quantitative impact, positive or negative. However, the analysis of qualitative data presented in this chapter suggests that although the frequency of inter-pupil conflicts may not have decreased, the manner in which they were resolved was radically transformed by the implementation of a peer mediation service.

#### *7.6.6 A note on sustainability*

At the last point of contact with the school investigated in this chapter (Spring term 2002, one year after initial peer mediation training), the peer mediation service was still running. It had however suffered two breaks in service. One had been caused by the secondment of the teacher coordinating the service. The second gap had been caused by the transition of service coordination from one teacher to another. This suggests the role and continuity of a coordinator is key in maintaining the new model of activity (Sharp and Thompson 1994). Thus the transition from arbitration to third-party mediation depicted in figure 7.6 may have only been temporary or sporadic.



### **7.7 Summary, initial findings and critical commentary**

Chapter seven has set out an expansive learning approach (Engestrom 1987, 1999a, 1999b) to understanding processes of transformation at one school where a peer mediation service was implemented. This realises Scribner's (Engestrom 1999a) four stages of post-Vygotskian method by reconstructing historical behaviour, observing rudimentary behaviour and deliberately provoking and observing new behaviour. In adopting such an approach, it was possible to investigate the activity of conflict resolution before, during and after peer mediation training, characteristic of a type IV conflict cycle between alternative models of activity (figure 6.3).

The observation of rudimentary behaviour provided by the questioning phase of the approach highlighted that the vast majority of inter-pupil behavioural-interactional (type I) conflicts were enacted on the playground and these were arbitrated by teachers. In reconstructing historical behaviour, the analysing phase suggested that teachers believed pupils' inabilities to resolve conflicts for themselves originated from cultural differences between the school and the home. In response to these perceived deficiencies, teachers took great time to model a reflective approach to conflict resolution in their own communication. Compositely, these phases describe the structure of the current model of activity for resolving interpersonal conflicts in school, depicted as the traditional activity and its history on a conflict cycle (figure 6.3).

The decision to implement a peer mediation service is akin to the stages in which Scribner (Engestrom 1999a) suggests new behaviour should be provoked and observed, outlined within the modelling, interrogating and implementing phases of stage one of the empirical research design. The production of an alternative model of activity constitutes a type IV conflict between a traditional object (current model for resolving conflict in school) and an innovative object (peer mediation). These objects are underpinned by contrasting principles of power and control, characterised by teacher authority and pupil participation respectively. The further-questioning phase of analysis shows how the principles of power and control underpinning the traditional activity were transformed to

complete a type IV conflict cycle (figure 6.3). The data shared in this chapter showed how the implementation of a peer mediation service resulted in a shift in the division of labour and rules regarding who and how conflict is resolved, and the production of new tools. The use of these new tools in peer mediation and other contexts reframed direct confrontations (type I conflicts) as a choice between alternative courses of action, typical of a type IV conflict.

The shift in the division of labour and rules of the traditional activity can be illuminated by Bernstein's (2000) concepts of classification and framing, as shown in figure 7.12.

<b>Arbitration</b>	<b>Peer mediation</b>	<b>Negotiation</b>
Strong classification	Weaker classification between teachers and pupils, stronger classification between pupils and peer mediators	Weak classification
Strong framing	Strong framing	Weak framing

**Figure 7.12: Classification and framing of different approaches to conflict resolution**

The traditional activity, teacher arbitration, is characterised by strong 'classification and framing' (Bernstein 2000), where strict rules for acceptable behaviour apply and sanctions for breaking these rules are enforced by teachers. In contrast, negotiation is characterised by weak 'classification and framing', where horizontally related parties agree a solution between themselves. The innovative activity of peer mediation lies between these approaches. One can understand the transformation of the traditional activity as a process in which there is relinquishment of some teacher power to peer mediators and hence a weakening of 'classification and framing' between teachers and pupils. Although horizontal relations underpin the process of peer mediation, peer mediators are trained to halt the process if ground rules are not kept and they use a tool to facilitate the process according to pre-scripted stages (Cohen 1995, Stacey and Robinson 1997, Tyrrell 1995). In this sense, peer mediators use a strong framing device (the peer

mediation script) to regulate the process in a way that is more formal than negotiation. In this process, a division of labour is created in which pupils act out roles of peer mediators and disputants. Hence, classification between some pupils is strengthened by the innovative activity. Overall, one can understand this transformation as the transference of power and control from teachers to peer mediators, who use a new cultural tool (the script) to regulate peers' less serious conflicts.

Stage one provides a thorough account of such processes of transformation at one school, using the central concepts and methodology of CHAT and its elaboration to illuminate these processes. However, there is a gulf between the illumination provided by the qualitative and quantitative data collection tools used. The intervention had little measurable effect on improving the self-esteem and loci of control of pupils trained as peer mediators. It also had no measurable effect on reducing bullying and general aggression indices. However, this was in contradistinction to teachers' own reflections, who during interviews reported that a number of children trained as peer mediators appeared to grow in confidence and that the escalation of minor type I conflicts was being prevented.

There are a number of possibilities to explain the incongruency between the data collected. First, the decision to measure self-esteem and loci of control as an intervention outcome can be criticised. The aim of peer mediation (to encourage an alternative approach to conflict resolution facilitated by peers) is not directly related to the goal of raising self-esteem or internalising loci of control (Johnson and Johnson 1996), even if the latter is possible. Therefore, it could be criticised that the writer chose the wrong phenomena to measure, particularly in light of Coopersmith's (1981) research. However, there was a case for taking this measure based on other studies, notably Stacey (1996), which claimed a relationship between these two variables. In this case, it could be argued that the correct phenomenon was measured and either the phenomenon did not change or the phenomenon did change but was measured unreliably. It is plausible that peer mediation training transformed psychological phenomena that were not recorded by the data collection tool chosen. Whereas the B-G Steem Questionnaire (Maines and

Robinson 1998) has been stringently tested for reliability it contains few 'indicators' of self-esteem that may have been directly enhanced by becoming a peer mediator.

The decision to use 'Life in School' checklists (Arora 1994, 1999) to collect indices of general aggression and bullying before, during and after intervention was more tenable, although greater thought could have been given to developing this tool to more directly record the four different types of conflict modelled in chapter five. One of the problems of using such a tool to record outcomes of peer mediation training is the lack of direct relationship between the outcomes and aims of the intervention (Johnson and Johnson 1996). The emphasis of peer mediation training is on the aftermath of a conflict. The intervention is not behaviourist in nature (Roderick et al 1997); nothing is done to remove the material resources, matters of friendship, school rules and so on that stimulate so much pupil conflict (Higgins and Priest 1990). Hence, it is unlikely that peer mediation training would result in any reductions in such instances as measured by the index. Rather, the implementation of a peer mediation service produces a new model of activity in which the same conflicts are resolved with the aid of peers rather than teachers.

Both quantitative data collection tools used are open to considerable criticism, especially from the theoretical standpoint adopted by this thesis. These tools are inconsistent with the anti-positivistic epistemology advocated by CHAT. Ratner (1997) argues that the use of such questionnaires is tantamount to the positivistic practice of observing behavioural phenomenon. This is because they elicit simple responses that offer little or no analysis of their diverse and cultural significance. For example, 'Life in School' indices (Arora 1994, 1999) require children to self-report a number of incidents that may have happened to them in the week before, including such 'violent' actions as being hit and kicked. Although these matters are self-reported, there is no effective difference between this process and a researcher counting every such incident on the playground. Both processes make a number of erroneous ontological assumptions about the nature of human behaviour and methodology for its study (Ratner 1997). In eliciting such responses or counting such acts, a researcher treats 'being' kicked as a universal indication of someone being the victim of aggression or bullying (a type I conflict). Yet, the 'kick' could have

been an accident within a game of football. Additionally, two other pupils could be involved in an intense argument, yet this would not be counted as an act of aggression or violence, nor conflict. The use of such a tool as an outcome measure within this thesis makes the ontological assumption that conflict is a behavioural act, which can be expressed operationally (e.g. kicking, hitting = conflict) and subjected to statistical testing (e.g. less kicking, hitting after intervention = intervention successful in reducing conflict).

Ratner (1997) also argues that statistical calculations obscure the cultural and psychological meaning of behaviour, yielding little information regarding why and how two variables may be associated. For example, the calculation of mean averages can hide the distribution of individual responses. In the data collected, children trained as peer mediators demonstrated some gender differences regarding their changes in self-esteem and loci of control over the intervention period. Yet, the opportunity was not taken to investigate this matter in anything other than superficial detail. The use of such data collection tools and subsequent calculations based on their measurements contravenes CHAT's notion of human activity as dialectical outlined so elaborately in this thesis. CHAT posits it is difficult to separate variables such as mind and world because they are intertwined (Daniels 2001a).

Cole (1996) argues that to understand the way children's behaviour develops they have to be observed in natural settings, whilst interacting with familiar adults over prolonged periods of time, attributes hardly associated with the abstract strategies adopted in this respect. The decision to enter an actual activity system undergoing transformation represents a research strategy consistent with CHAT (Engestrom 1999a) and provides far greater description regarding processes of transformation. However, much of the validation of these processes was drawn from individual reflections collated from interviews. Whereas this provided the opportunity to gauge participants' own observations of cultural and psychological changes in activity, it yielded unclear evidence regarding the degree to which psychological phenomena had been transformed by intervention.

An alternative strategy would have been to use repertory grids, a tool of personal construct analysis developed by George Kelly (Smith 1995). Repertory grids are used as a means of analysing how individuals construct the world. The advantage of this technique is that it provides both subjective/idiographic and objective/statistical data. The objective data are however more meaningful because it is derived from a subjective exercise. Participants are presented with cards with elements relevant to the research topic and themselves. They are then asked to make comparisons between these as they are shown three at a time and are asked to say how two are similar, to then say why and provide the opposite concept of this 'tie'. The process allows individuals' to draw upon their conceptualisation of themselves in the world. These are then scored by the participants on a semantic differential regarding how well they match the participant's own constructs, which are then recorded and analysed. The questions can be repeated over time to see how events, pregnancy being Smith's (1995) illustration, are associated with their reconstruction of the world. Using such a technique would have allowed detailed analysis of how pupils constructed conflict and relationships before and after intervention. Such a technique may have resulted in a clearer indication of whether object expansion had taken place for individual subjects, i.e. did pupils possess a greater repertoire of conflict resolution strategies, or different values after peer mediation training.

Despite limitations with a number of the data collection tools used, interview data proved illuminating. Analysis of these interviews, using first level and pattern codes informed by CHAT resulted in the identification of a number of key findings. These can be summarised as:

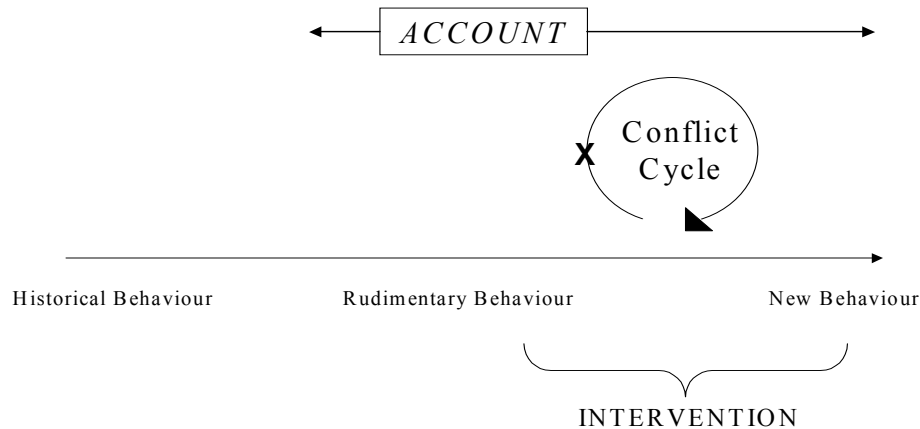
- The implementation of the innovative activity (peer mediation) transformed the rules and division of labour of the traditional activity, giving pupils greater power and control to resolve conflicts between themselves.
- Processes of transformation were enabled by a degree of synergy between traditional and innovative activities.

- The group trained as peer mediators became a more collaborative group. This process was credited to the production of a shared object (the peer mediation service).
- The transformation of the traditional activity produced new mediational tools such as the peer mediation script. Pupils and teachers used such tools in various settings to reframe conflicts that may have previously been experienced as direct confrontations (type I conflicts) as choices between alternative courses of action (type IV conflicts).

The account of transformation presented in chapter seven used concepts from CHAT, and elaboration of the theory within this thesis, to illuminate processes of transformation. Although some of these processes are similar to those identified in the literature regarding whole school approaches to conflict resolution in schools (e.g. Sharp and Thompson 1994), the analysis of data presented in this chapter using such concepts provides a degree of specificity unusual in other studies. Many empirical investigations often neglect to include processes of transformation in their analysis (Visser et al 2000), whilst others conduct their analysis with an emphasis on the individual (Daniels 1996). This study highlights the importance of societal concepts such as labour, rules and tools in understanding and explaining processes of social and individual transformation (Davydov 1999a, Engestrom 1999a). This elucidation is continued in chapter nine.

## CHAPTER 8: THE PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES OF IMPLEMENTING PEER MEDIATION SERVICES IN THE PAST AT OTHER SCHOOLS<sup>2</sup>

### 8.1 Introduction



**Figure 8.1: An account of transformation**

Chapter seven presented an ‘account’, where the current model of activity for resolving conflicts in school (the traditional activity) was transformed by the implementation of a peer mediation service (the innovative activity). The change process outlined in chapter seven was informed by Engestrom’s (1999a) theory of expansive learning, in which Scribner’s four stages of post-Vygotskian method were realised. The analysis included observation of rudimentary behaviour (existing approaches to conflict resolution),

<sup>2</sup> Parts of this chapter were presented at the 5th Congress of the International Society for Cultural Research and Activity Theory, Amsterdam, 19/06/02 and Mediation UK Conference 2002, Glasgow, 24/06/02.

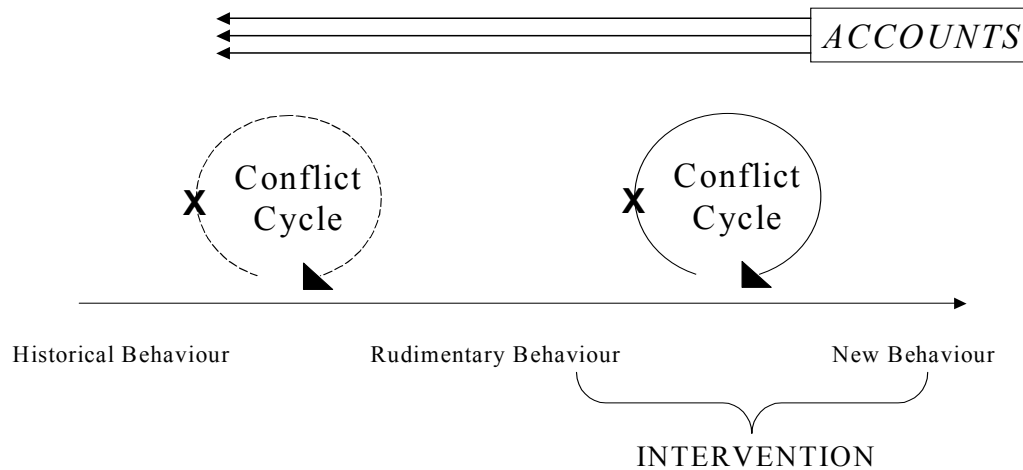


reconstruction of the historical development of this behaviour, and the provocation and further observation of new behaviour (a peer mediation service). This ‘account’ can be represented as a type IV conflict cycle between alternative models of activity, shown in figure 8.1. Concepts from CHAT and elaboration of the theory within this thesis were used to inform the analysis.

The implementation of a peer mediation service resulted in a new model of activity for resolving conflicts at the school, which involved a radical shift in the division of labour of the traditional activity. As this happened, classification between teachers and pupils was weakened and the classification between pupils and peers acting as mediators was strengthened. Similarly, the rules for resolving conflict became less strongly framed between some staff members and pupils when they adopted a more conciliatory approach in place of arbitration. Meanwhile, for pupils, the process of peer mediation involved a strong framing device, a script, which set out the procedures and rules for children finding their own mutually satisfying solutions. This transformation of activity can be understood as the relinquishment of some power by teachers to pupils who act as mediators for their peers. The new social relations created by the innovative activity produced new mediating artefacts that pupils used to regulate themselves. By reframing behavioural conflicts (types I-III) as choices between alternative courses of action (type IV conflict) the range of possible actions available to disputants was expanded. For example, both teachers and pupils reported being more sensitive to the role of others’ feelings in resolving disputes.

The purpose of chapter eight is i) to contrast the account of transformation from the previous chapter to accounts at other schools, which have attempted to establish peer mediation services with mixed success in the past, and ii) locate these accounts within a cultural-historical analysis, as represented in figure 8.2. This forms stage two of the empirical research design introduced in chapter six, hereon referred to as ‘stage two’. The advantage of this approach is that it makes possible a cultural-historical analysis of longstanding transformation not possible at a single case studied for a short period of time. In doing so, knowledge regarding why some interventions fail to be sustained is achieved, an issue little understood in the literature (Visser et al 2000). Cross-institutional

analysis is important in understanding the replicability of peer mediation because the processes and outcomes observed in the previous chapter may be situated within cultural practices unique to the particular school investigated (Brown et al 1992, Cole 1996). Hence, a key component of chapter eight is the analysis of the idiosyncratic practices in schools that result in conflict between innovative and traditional objects (represented as ‘x’s on figures 8.1 and 8.2) and their role in whether the traditional activity is or is not transformed and subsequently reproduced over time. This provides several accounts of type IV conflict cycles.



**Figure 8.2: Historical accounts of transformation**

Data collected for analysis within this chapter is derived from three main sources. These are ‘Checkpoints’ (Forum on Children and Violence 1999 and appendix 1a), questionnaires of school organisation and pedagogic practice (Markham 1999 and appendix 1b), and interviews with teachers and WMQPEP trainers. To provide the multiple accounts of transformation for stage two, all the schools at which WMQPEP had

implemented peer mediation services in the years 1998-2000 were contacted. Eight out of the nine schools contacted agreed to participate. The one school that declined was still running a peer mediation service but did not wish to be involved. The 8 remaining schools comprised of 1 infant, 1 junior, 4 primary (infant and junior) and 2 high schools. Peer mediation services (or modifications of) were still being run at all of these schools apart from at one of the high schools. Although, at one of the primary schools it was having little impact. The sample is limited in terms of variety of outcomes but provides one example of peer mediation not being sustained, at least one example of peer mediation being sustained ineffectively and several examples of peer mediation being sustained successfully. The unexpected high number of schools still running peer mediation schemes can perhaps be explained by the fact that peer mediation training conducted by WMQPEP is normally initiated after an introductory training programme in conflict resolution skills. Consequently, schools have a reasonable idea whether such a service complements either their existing or envisioned approach to managing conflict and the support that might be needed to ensure the service is likely to be successful before investing a considerable amount of their own extra money and time into further training.

## **8.2 Schools as ‘cultural systems’ and peer mediation status**

Schools are cultural systems; each will vary considerably in how principles of power and control are expressed as organisational and communicational discourses (Bernstein 2000, Daniels 1996). Regarding conflict resolution, ways of dividing labour will differ in terms of the classification of boundaries between teachers and pupils. Similarly, rules for regulating conflict resolution will differ in how explicitly they frame conduct. These principles produce communicational discourses that will offer different possibilities for actors within an activity system. Tools produced by other systems (e.g. WMQPEP) will be appropriated in ways largely shaped by these principles of power and control (Cole 1996). For example, peer mediation varies from being an integral component of the

management of relationships in some schools to a ‘bolt-on’ feature in others (McNamara 1995, Stacey et al 1997).

To ascertain information about the cultural-historical practices of each school to contrast against the status of each school’s peer mediation service, three sources of data were collected and each will be presented in turn. The procedures for collecting and analysing these data were described in chapter seven. A senior member of staff from each school completed a ‘Checkpoints’ questionnaire (Forum on Children and Violence 1999 and appendix 1a). This provides an indication of the degree to which principles of non-violence inform other activities at each school. This is important because the activity of peer mediation is underpinned by principles of power and control that may contradict those underpinning other activities in school. The literature on peer mediation argues that for such services to be effective they need to be supported by a whole school approach, where all activities are underpinned by a common set of values and practices (e.g. Cohen 1995, Stacey et al 1997). In the absence of a whole school approach, peer mediation may be disjointed from the dominant culture of the school and its impact and longevity constrained. The completed ‘checkpoints’ show a clear relationship between the profile of principles of non-violence in each school and the sustainability of a peer mediation service.

A school organisation and pedagogic practice questionnaire (Markham 1999 and appendix 1b, see also Daniels et al 1996) was also completed. This provides an indication of how principles of power and control in schools are expressed as organisational and communication discourses, which may have an impact on the frequency, modality and resolution of conflicts. No clear relationships were identified from the questionnaire data, although interview data highlighted that those schools where peer mediation had been sustained were characterised by weaker classification and framing in the teacher’s management of conflicts in the classroom compared to those schools where peer mediation had not been sustained.

Interviews were conducted with the member of staff responsible for coordinating the peer mediation service at each school and five trainers from WMQPEP. Teachers interviewed

were asked to reflect upon the intervention, processes of transformation and its impact on approaches to conflict resolution at their school (see appendix 3f). The interview schedule comprised the same set of questions as for teachers interviewed during stage one, extended to incorporate a number of the themes identified in the previous chapter. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The analysis of these interviews involved first level and pattern coding (Miles and Huberman 1994) as outlined in section 7.6. The process of pattern coding these data further elucidates the critical relationship between forms of power and control in schools, their translation into communicational discourses, their impact on object expansion and ultimately approaches to conflict resolution.

### *8.2.1 'Checkpoints' and peer mediation status*

The literature regarding initiatives in schools that deal with such issues as conflict, aggression, violence and bullying makes frequent reference to the need for such initiatives to be supported by a whole school approach (Cohen 1995, Gulbenkian Foundation 1995, Sharp and Thompson 1994, Stacey et al 1997). In order to ascertain the extent to which principles of non-violence inform other activities at each school included in the sample, a senior member of staff completed a 'Checkpoints' questionnaire (Forum on Children and Violence 1999, appendix 1a). This provides an audit of 60 recommendations made by the Gulbenkian Foundation (1995) to promote non-violence in school under the headings: home-school-community relationships, values, organisation, environment, curriculum and staff training.

Figure 8.3 shows which of the 60 checkpoints are in place, proposed or not in place at each of the schools. The procedures for collecting these data were described in section 8.2a (see also appendix 1a). A clear relationship between the status of each school's peer mediation service and the extent to which principles of non-violence inform other activities can be observed.

Checkpoint:	School A (Infants)	School B (Junior)	School C (Primary)	School D (Primary)	School E (Primary)	School F (Primary)	School G (High)	School H (High)
1.1								
1.2								
1.3								
1.4								
1.5								
1.6								
1.7								
1.8								
1.9								
1.10								
2.1								
2.2								
2.3								
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5.1								
5.2								
5.3								
5.4								
5.5								
5.6								
5.7								
5.8								
5.9								
5.10								

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
6.1								
6.2								
6.3								
6.4								
6.5								
6.6								
6.7								
6.8								
6.9								
6.10								
Total number (n/60) of recommendations in place or proposed	46	53	37	26	52	51	41	32
Peer mediation service status	4 <sup>th</sup> year	4 <sup>th</sup> year	4 <sup>th</sup> year	2 <sup>nd</sup> year, limited impact	4 <sup>th</sup> year	3 <sup>rd</sup> year	4 <sup>th</sup> year	Abandoned

Key:		In place
		Proposed
		Not in place

**Figure 8.3: Checkpoints (1.1-6.10) by each school (A-H) and peer mediation service status**

Figure 8.3 shows that each school has approximately half or more of the checkpoints in place/proposed. This is not surprising as each school employed WMQPEP to provide peer mediation training for their pupils at some point in the past and is thus likely to have some commitment to promoting principles of non-violence. However, peer mediation is not being sustained effectively at schools D and H, which both have the least number of checkpoints in place/proposed. At School D, peer mediation, by its coordinator's own admission, is not being well used and having little impact. At school H, peer mediation was abandoned and replaced by a teacher controlled disciplinary system. School D has only 26 recommendations in place and these are distributed quite evenly. School H has only 32 recommendations in place. Although school H has seven out of ten recommendations regarding the environment (checkpoint 4) in place, education about violence within the curriculum (checkpoint 5) is scant and like all schools apart from B, E and F, staff training (checkpoint 6) on such issues is limited.

The schools (A, B, C, E and F) where peer mediation has been running for a number of years have a very high number of checkpoints in place. These are comprehensively

distributed with the exception of recommendations regarding the curriculum (checkpoint 5) at school E, the environment (checkpoint 4) at school G and staff training (checkpoint 6) at all schools apart from B, E and F. School C, a Catholic primary school, has the least number of recommendations in place of all the schools sustaining an effective peer mediation service, 37 in total. However, the teacher coordinating the service at this school drew attention to the role of the school's Christian ethos in relating principles of non-violence to behaviour at school. Similarly, interview data shows that schools A, B, E and F have and communicate explicit values of non-violence to their pupils. This suggests that these schools have a consistent whole-school approach to conflict resolution, identified in the literature by Smith and Sharp (1994) as an essential component of this and other anti-violence initiatives. Such an approach is necessary for the intervention to become an integral component of a new model of activity for resolving conflicts in school (Stacey et al 1997). Schools D and H also have strong framing devices but these are built upon principles of teacher control and conflicted with the practice of peer mediation, as interview data will explicate.

### *8.2.2 School organisation, pedagogic practice and peer mediation status*

A senior member of staff from each school in the sample completed a questionnaire about school organisation and pedagogic practice (Markham 1999, appendix 1b). The purpose of administering this questionnaire was to ascertain whether there was any relationship between principles of power and control as expressed as organisational and communicational discourses and the status of peer mediation services at each school. Figure 8.4 shows summaries of the data by each school according to column headings derived from Daniels et al's (1996) guidelines on interpreting the questionnaire. The procedures for analysing the questionnaire data were outlined in section 8.2b (see also appendix 1b). A column on reception and general atmosphere has not been included in figure 8.4 because a reliable description of such requires extended observation, which goes beyond the single visit made to some of the schools.



Each of the columns (particularly column 3) is supplemented by information gathered from interview data. As an illustration, question 1 (appendix 3f) asks teachers to comment on the different approaches to teaching at their school and how this relates to their own practice. If the management of behaviour was not included in this response, it was prompted. If the teacher described a system of strict rules enforced by teachers this was interpreted as indicative of strong classification between pupils and teachers, where strong framing devices regulated order. If the teacher described a more dialogic approach to discipline with more flexible rules, this was interpreted as weaker classification between pupils and teachers, where weaker framing devices regulated order. As well as the answers to this question giving greater description of the management of discipline at each school it also identified whether all teaching staff adhere to common procedures.

The fifth column indicates the current status of the peer mediation service, as also ascertained from interview data. This includes how long the service has been running, whether it has been modified or not and whether it is self-maintained or still supported by external training. The latter point is important because it gives an indication of whether the peer mediation service is run independently, which suggests the new model of activity has become a normalised component of the management of conflict within the school.

	<b>1. Curriculum*</b>	<b>2. Social Regulation (uniform and dress)</b>	<b>3. Discipline</b>	<b>4. Decision Making</b>	<b>5. Peer mediation Service Status</b>
School A (Infants)	Weak classification between all subjects.	Clear guidelines adhered to.	All staff use a recording sheet to deal with behaviour that follows a process similar to peer mediation.	Horizontal management, planning is in teams.	Modified service in operation for 4 <sup>th</sup> year with occasional support.
School B (Junior)	Strong classification between core subjects. Weak classification between non-core subjects.	Guidelines with flexibility.	All staff use a recording sheet to deal with behaviour, which follows a process similar to peer mediation.	Horizontal management, planning is in teams.	Modified service in operation for 4 <sup>th</sup> year with occasional support.

	<b>1. Curriculum*</b>	<b>2. Social Regulation (uniform and dress)</b>	<b>3. Discipline</b>	<b>4. Decision Making</b>	<b>5. Peer mediation Service Status</b>
School C (Primary)	Strong classification between core subjects. Weak classification between non-core subjects.	Clear guidelines adhered to.	Christian ethos,. Dialogic approach to challenging behaviour outside of the classroom.	Horizontal management, planning is done individually.	Running, 4 <sup>th</sup> year. Training still provided by external agency.
School D (Primary)	Strong classification between all subjects.	Guidelines with flexibility.	Teacher enforced system of rewards and punishments.	Horizontal management, planning is done individually.	Running 2 <sup>nd</sup> year, self-maintained, little impact.
School E (Primary)	Strong classification between core subjects. Some non-core subjects strongly classified, some cross-curricular themes also.	Clear guidelines adhered to.	Behaviourist strategies balanced by dialogic approaches to challenging behaviour outside of the classroom. Children encouraged to be independent.	Horizontal management, planning is done individually.	Service entering 4 <sup>th</sup> year of operation, now self-maintained.
School F (Primary)	Strong classification between all subjects.	Clear guidelines adhered to.	Behaviourist strategies balanced by dialogic approach.	Vertical management, planning is done in teams.	Service entering 3 <sup>rd</sup> year of operation, now self-maintained.
School G (High)	Strong classification between all subjects.	Strict dress code.	Strict code of discipline balanced by dialogic approaches. Pupils encouraged to be independent.	Horizontal management, planning is done in departmental teams.	Modified service in operation for 4 <sup>th</sup> year with occasional support.
School H (High)	Strong classification between all subjects.	Clear guidelines adhered to.	Teacher enforced system of rewards and punishments.	Vertical management, planning is done in departmental teams.	Abandoned after 2 terms.

**Figure 8.4: School organisation, pedagogic practice and peer mediation service status**

(\* The framing of the curriculum was strong at all schools, i.e. teachers controlled the selection, sequencing and pacing of educational activities.)

Figure 8.4 shows no discernable relationships between the questionnaire data and the status of peer mediation services. The two schools (D and H) where the peer mediation service is having least impact are characterised by both strong classification and framing of the curriculum but this also applies to two other schools running an effective peer mediation service (schools F and G). The questionnaire data alone does not provide any information why this might be the case. Peer mediation training is usually delivered within a specialist course. In this sense, the skills involved are taught discretely and can be described as strongly classified and framed. However, schools can vary in whether such training is a feature bolted onto the curriculum or informs communicational discourse throughout the school (McNamara 1995, Stacey et al 1997). Interview data presented in this chapter indicates that schools D and H failed to distribute the new mediational tools produced by peer mediation training across the school and/or principles of power and control that underpinned other activities at these schools conflicted with those underpinning peer mediation.

Similarly, little can be said of the relationship between how decisions are made and peer mediation status. Whereas there are clear demarcations between members of staff and their responsibilities at school H, this also applies to school F. There are though significant cultural differences between the two schools. School F was characterised by a headteacher who made many of the decisions affecting school culture. However, she was committed to giving pupils genuine responsibilities and her decisions were well supported by the staff. The headteacher of school H was not well supported and the majority of teachers favoured traditional modes of discipline in contrast to her visions for greater pupil autonomy. In these two cases, it was less important how decisions were made but whether these decisions were supported by a 'critical mass' (Daniels et al 1998, Smith and Thompson 1994) of teachers at each school.

The difficulty in discerning relationships from the questionnaire data identifies a limitation regarding the purpose and administration of this research tool. The use of the questionnaire can be criticised for two reasons. First, it is not sufficiently related to the

research question. Secondly, but to a lesser degree, some of the practices it records are problematic given the sample and recent changes to educational policy. Both criticisms will be outlined in greater detail.

First, Bernstein's (2000) approach to analysis can be applied at any of a number of different levels of school organisation and pedagogic practice. This allows analysis of power and control to proceed at a level appropriate to a particular research question (Daniels 2001b). However, the content of the questionnaire administered is insufficiently related to the research question of this study. The questionnaire provides an excellent tool for ascertaining the degree to which teachers' planning and relationships with other teachers, pupils' learning, curriculum selection, sequencing and pacing are strongly or weakly classified and framed. Interpretation of the questionnaire data also provides an indication of whether such educational activities are separated into the acquisition of specialised skills in a process controlled by the teacher or are the subject of more integrated development with a greater role for pupils. It may not be erroneous to investigate whether schools that give children greater responsibilities for their own learning in class might also give them greater control in the regulation of their peers' conflicts. However, it is erroneous to assume the existence of a direct relationship between these variables with one dependent upon the other (Johnson and Johnson 1996, Toomela 2001). The questionnaire data is useful in understanding how the division of labour and rules are structured in relation to certain educational activities. However, it only provides limited information regarding how the division of labour and rules underpinning the activity of conflict resolution are structured.

The previous chapter presented data showing how organisational and interactional practices regarding the resolution of conflict were transformed by the implementation of a peer mediation service, which also resulted in a corresponding transformation in communicational practices. This finding was related to a level of analysis concerned with the activity of conflict resolution in schools and not others. Hence, to investigate whether peer mediation services sustained at other schools involved similar processes, the administration of such a questionnaire would have benefited from refining its content to a

level of analysis more directly concerned with the research question, rather than using a readily available tool. The questionnaire could have included a greater number of questions regarding the activity of conflict resolution, including issues of classification: who resolves different types of conflict, and issues of framing: how are these conflicts resolved. Such matters were elicited from interview data only.

The second criticism of the use of this questionnaire concerns the content of some of its questions and their interpretation, given the sample and changes to educational policy in the UK since the introduction of the National Curriculum. Although the questionnaire data can be used to interpret whether a number of educational activities are strongly or weakly classified or framed at several schools, this is problematic with this sample for at least two reasons. *One*, the sample includes infant, junior and high schools. Infant schools tend to be characterised by weaker classification and framing of curriculum subjects than high schools (Salisbury and Jackson 1996) and this is the case in this sample. Therefore comparison in this regard is of limited value. *Two*, teachers interviewed at all the primary schools reported that the mornings were characterised by stronger classification and framing of curriculum subjects than in the afternoons. Furthermore, such curriculum decisions have become the remit of centralised government. The National Literacy and Numeracy strategies are delivered in the morning and at several of these schools in ability groups. Other subjects and cross-curricular work are delivered in the afternoons and more commonly in mixed-ability groups. The Literacy and Numeracy strategies set out not only what should be taught but how, which makes it difficult to apply Bernstein's (2000) concepts of classification and framing consistently and meaningfully at this particular level of analysis.

Given these limitations it was useful to complement the questionnaire data with interview data, particularly in relation to issues of discipline. Such issues are more directly related to the activity of conflict resolution in schools. Strong classification and framing in approaches to discipline are characterised by a rigid division of labour where boundaries between teachers and pupils are clearly demarcated and teachers strictly control the rules for managing conflicts. Weak classification and framing in approaches to discipline are

characterised by more horizontal relationships between teachers and pupils with a greater role for pupils in the process. The interview data highlights a much clearer relationship between the latter and a peer mediation service's impact and longevity.

The schools included in this sample can be characterised by two distinct approaches to discipline. Schools D and H had an emphasis on teacher enforcement of rewards and sanctions to regulate behaviour, as described in sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2a. Schools A, B, C and E had an emphasis on more dialogic approaches to regulating behaviour, as described in section 2.4.2b. Teachers in these schools would prefer to have a quiet word outside the classroom or class-time to deal with transgressions. This latter approach, or at least a balance of the two (e.g. schools E, F and G), was indicative of a more caring and listening approach, which appears to complement peer mediation. In those schools where peer mediation is being sustained effectively there is consistency between the principles of power and control underpinning traditional and innovative activities. This was a common theme in the interview data.

### *8.2.3 Interview data*

Figure 8.3 suggests that schools where principles of non-violence underpin many aspects of their values, organisation, environment, curriculum, staff training and relationships with the community are also those most likely to establish and sustain a peer mediation service. This observation is both supported and elaborated by interviews conducted with teachers at each school and WMQPEP trainers. Interview data shows that schools where the traditional activity was underpinned by strong classification and framing, characterised by rigid teacher controlled systems of rewards and sanctions (schools D and H) conflicted with the principles of power and control underpinning peer mediation. In other research conducted regarding peer mediation (e.g. Griffith 1996) strong demarcations between teachers and pupils, and autocratic approaches to discipline make it difficult for teachers to entrust pupils with greater responsibilities. The difference between peer mediation and such approaches to conflict resolution are not a superficial

collision of practices or ‘contradictions’ (Engestrom 1999a) but represent fundamentally different models of activity. Conversely, those schools where the traditional activity was underpinned by weaker classification and framing, characterised by more dialogic and flexible approaches to the management of conflict, were in greater synergy with the principles of power and control underpinning peer mediation. In these schools, the new social relations created by the innovative activity produce new mediating artefacts, which are reproduced and distributed throughout the school. This results in a number of significant outcomes for pupils and teachers.

Analysis of interview data in this chapter used a coding process informed by the key concepts of CHAT as employed and developed by this thesis. The procedures for this coding process were set out in chapter seven (see section 7.6). Themes derived from analysis of transformation at the single school described in the previous chapter were used as first-level then pattern codes (Miles and Huberman 1994) to identify similar patterns at schools investigated in stage two of the research. Here, the computer programme Nvivo was useful because it allowed the coding process initiated in stage one of the empirical research to be replicated and refined in stage two. The programme also includes a search tool that allows researchers to identify and juxtapose themes contained in a number of source documents. In doing so, many observations made in the previous chapter were supported and in some cases elaborated. In other cases, new pattern codes had to be developed and existing pattern codes modified in light of new insights (Charmaz 1995, Seale and Kelly 1998). Using this approach, the writer identified a total of ten key themes. The first six of which, can be understood as ‘processes’ involved in the implementation of peer mediation services. These processes involve the expansion of the traditional object (the current model of activity for resolving conflict in school). Themes 7-10 can be understood as the outcomes of these processes.

Object expansion involved:

1. A shift in the division of labour of the traditional activity, where staff members modify their perceptions of power and control.
2. The reproduction and distribution of new tools by teachers and pupils.
3. A high profile for the new tools produced by the innovative activity.
4. Synergy between the principles of power and control underpinning the innovative activity and other activities in school.
5. Attention to ‘challenging’ pupils.
6. Attention to sustainability and development.

When social relations were transformed and translated into new mediational tools, which were given high profile and supported by the whole culture of the school, the following four outcomes were observed:

7. Greater group cohesion/ a shift from coordination to communication for peer mediators.
8. Reductions in the frequency and intensity of type I conflicts.
9. Modification of the communicational discourse within schools.
10. Extended thought processes and shifts in conflict modality from types I-III to IV.

Themes 1-6, 7 and 9 relate to themes identified by the analysis of stage one of the empirical research contained within chapter seven, which have been used to code similar patterns in stage two interview data. The other themes were identified by processes of first-level and pattern coding (Miles and Huberman 1994) of new findings within the data.

Nvivo was then used to sort the data into outputs under each theme, including examples of anonymous data. In doing so, the writer was able to view segments of text by each theme and their original source. Figure 8.4 presents a reduced table of these data by correlating each theme (as column headings) against the sample (as rows). It is then indicated with a ‘+’ which interviewees provided evidence of each theme at their school.



A '+' is recorded if the interviewee disclosed at least one positive example of the presence of each theme. For example, if the interviewee described how s/he and/or any other member of staff had modified their perception of power and control in light of the intervention (theme 1) then an indication of the presence of this theme is recorded in figure 8.4. If the interviewee did not disclose any information regarding a theme, this omission is recorded with a '0'. If the interviewee presented antonymous data, this is recorded with a '-'. For example, if the interviewee declared that teachers' failing to modify their perceptions of authority had actually been an issue in peer mediation not being successful, this was also recorded. Figure 8.4 shows which processes and outcomes were divulged by interviewees at each school.

<b>Theme:</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
School A	+	+	+	+	0	+	+	+	+	+
School B	+	+	+	+	0	+	+	+	+	+
School C	0	0	+	+	0	0	0	+	0	0
School D	-	-	0	-	0	+	0	0	0	0
School E	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	0
School F	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
School G	+	+	+	+	0	+	+	+	0	0
School H	-	-	+	-	-	0	0	0	0	0

**Figure 8.4: The presence of evidence within interview data under each theme at each school**

Figure 8.4 shows a clear relationship between the prevalence of positive indicators under themes 1-6 and outcomes 7-10. Both schools D and H show a clear relationship between antonymous data for themes 1-6 and an absence of outcomes 7-10. School D has a peer mediation service in place but all of the themes identified as processes involved in establishing and sustaining peer mediation at other schools are either absent or antonymous, apart from strategies for replicating the training year after year. It is little surprising that the interviewee from school D stated that the service has had little impact. School H, where themes 1, 2, 4 and 5 are antonymous and 6 absent abandoned its 'high profile' peer mediation service after two school terms. After peer mediation failed at

school H, the interviewee reported that the school retorted to an alternative intervention, ‘Discipline for Learning’, which was later successful in minimising disruption in classroom and was underpinned by teacher control.

It is both schools D and H, which according to interview data and in contrast to others, are characterised by rigid and vertical disciplinary systems regulated by teacher controlled strategies of rewards and sanctions. Conflict resolution at both schools is characterised by strong classification between teachers and pupils, with teachers in a position of power. Teachers enforce discipline using strong framing devices, which set out strict rules and sanctions. The principles of power and control underpinning approaches at both schools clash with those underpinning peer mediation. Consequently, implementing peer mediation resulted in a number of type III and IV conflicts between the new model of activity, the traditional model of activity and its existing elements.

The management of behaviour at schools where peer mediation has been successful is underpinned by principles of power and control that are mutually consistent. In these schools, social relations translate into mediational tools that offer pupils opportunities to participate in generating their own solutions to conflicts. The analysis contained within this chapter, evokes the notion that these tools also need to be adequately distributed (Hutchins 1991, Resnick, Levine and Teasley 1991, Salomon 1993). Salomon (1993) argues that traditionally, cognition has been viewed as being possessed in the heads of individuals. His edited volume shares a number of cases highlighting how cognition is distributed across groups of collective practice, where tasks require coordination of several agents and where tasks are only possible with the aid of technological mediation. Moll et al (1993) and Mercer (2001) describe how classrooms are furnished with an array of semiotic devices. These may range from alphabets, algorithms, and the products of group brainstorm to displays of rules to remind pupils of classroom conduct, or guidelines specific to certain actions (e.g. talking). The data presented in this chapter suggests that in schools where peer mediation is successful, social relations are modified, translated into new mediational tools and similarly distributed. A broad notion of distributed cognition can include the way behaviour and communication is structured and

modelled by staff members. The interview data shows that teachers at schools where peer mediation is successful reproduce the principles and tools of peer mediation in their classroom organisation, management and discourse, and in doing so create an expanded range of opportunities for both themselves and their pupils to deal with conflict in new ways.

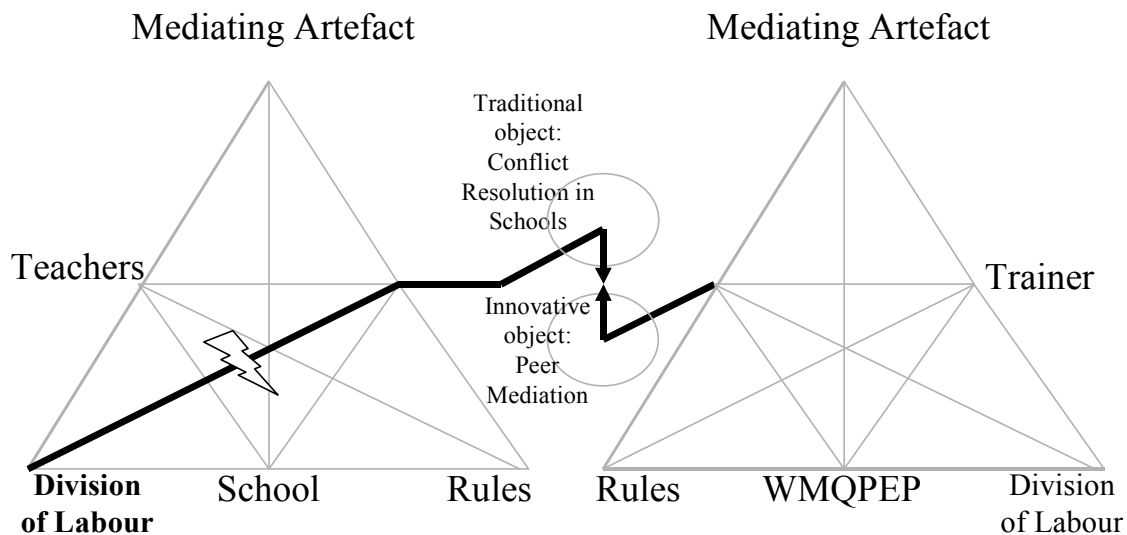
The remainder of this section will discuss each of the ten themes in greater detail. The grounded nature of the data will be demonstrated by including a number of citations from interview data. As the data is presented, reference will be made to preceding elaboration of theory and relevant literature.

*1) A shift in the division of labour of the traditional activity, where staff members modify their perceptions of power and control*

If peer mediation becomes a new model of activity for resolving inter-pupil conflict in schools there is a radical change in social relations. Chapter seven showed how the division of labour and rules of the traditional activity were modified to give pupils a greater role in the process. This transition can be understood as a process in which teachers' modify their perceptions of power and control (Tyrrell 1995). A component of this process is the weakening of classification between teachers and pupils when resolving conflict and a strengthening of classification between pupils and peers acting as mediators. Peer mediation uses a 'script', which serves as a framing device for delineating these new social relations, and the rules and procedures for generating mutually satisfying solutions to problems.

In the interviews conducted for stage two, teachers at schools A, B, C, E and G with successful and longstanding peer mediation schemes drew attention to similar processes of transformation. The expansion of approaches to conflict resolution at each of these schools (Engestrom 1999a, 1999b) involved modification of the principles of power and control underpinning the traditional activity. Griffith's (1996) analysis of peer mediation

services in Scotland noted that an obstacle to the success of a peer mediation service was teachers' reluctance to modify their own perceptions of authority, an observation also shared by Broadwood (2000). Peer mediation services require a shift in the division of labour, which gives pupils greater responsibilities. At schools where these processes do not occur, peer mediation is less successful (e.g. schools D and H).



**Figure 8.5: Type III conflict between division of labour and the new model of activity**

Figure 8.5 shows that where peer mediation is established, a type IV conflict between traditional and innovative objects (alternative models of activity for managing conflict) is resolved to modify the existing division of labour of the traditional activity to give pupils a greater role in the management of their peers' conflicts. As both the literature (Broadwood 2000, Griffith 1996, Tyrrell 1995) suggests and interview data indicates, when such object expansion is met with resistance from staff members, a type III conflict exists between the object of innovation and the power relations of the traditional activity

that constrains the implementation and success of the innovative activity. Such resistance is further explicated in following sections.

Schools A, B, E, F and G either highlighted perceptions of power and control shifting to regulate conflict in ways more consistent with peer mediation or that there already existed complementary organisational, interactional and communicational practices. These schools were also characterised by disciplinary systems that were more dialogic (see section 2.4.2b), giving pupils greater role in the regulation of their own behaviour and responding to transgression as mutual problems to be solved. The classteacher from school E describes the relationship between teacher communication, peer mediation and children's experiences of conflict.

“I think teachers are very aware of how important it is to listen to both sides...showing the children that you're listening and taking into account their views, has become a really important part of our discipline”.

(Classteacher, school E)

According to teachers, pupils at each of these schools liked both peer mediation and complementary disciplinary systems that take pupils' thoughts and feelings into account because they are less threatening. Such approaches to resolving conflict remove the fear of sanctions, as these two teachers describe.

“I think for some children to have an option where neither has to come out worst, where one has to be punished and another not is very appealing to some children”.

(Classteacher, school F)

“Many pupils prefer peer mediators to teachers as it avoids confrontation, it's a different escape route.”

(Classteacher, school E)

Whereas these extracts demonstrate how social relations have been transformed to produce new forms of communication, peer mediation in all schools was regarded as appropriate for conflicts perceived by teachers as less serious only. At all the schools in this sample, issues of conflict including racism, bullying and violence were not seen as

suitable for peer mediation. Here, and somewhat understandably, members of staff dealt with such matters. In these schools, the shift in division of labour only occurred within the activity of resolving ‘minor’ and not ‘major’ conflicts. At school F however, although serious conflicts were referred to staff members, these teachers acknowledged that conflict has an aftermath (Cohen 1995, Katz and Lawyer 1993, Pondy 1967, Thomas 1976) and pupils still have a relationship that may be in need of repair. Hence, teachers at school F encouraged pupils to use peer mediation, even after arbitration. This is the first of several examples within this chapter of schools modifying peer mediation to respond to their own cultural needs and values.

## *II) The reproduction and distribution of new tools by teachers and pupils*

Thus far, a process has been outlined in which peer mediation modifies social relations to produce new mediational tools. Interview data shows that for peer mediation to be successful, these new tools need to be reproduced and distributed by teachers and pupils. These processes are enabled by a critical mass (Daniels et al 1998, Sharp and Thompson 1994) of support from teachers for the new model of activity, complementary disciplinary and communicational practices and appropriation of the language of peer mediation. Schools also need to take great care in creating a culture where these new tools are consistently used and perceived by pupils and teachers as the appropriate way to resolve conflict. Issues regarding the reproduction and distribution of new tools by teachers and pupils are presented in turn.

### *a) The reproduction and distribution of new tools by teachers*

Chapter seven identified that the new social relations created by peer mediation produced new tools. For these to be reproduced and distributed by the whole school community (Smith and Thompson 1994) a number of processes were identified in the interview data. First, interviewees at four of the eight schools (A, B, E and G) drew attention to the need

for considerable staff support. Such support needs to include the senior management team and a sufficient number of teachers to give the new strategies a high profile (theme 3). One trainer from WMQPEP subsumes this point with the concept of ‘critical mass’ (Daniels et al 1998, Sharp and Thompson 1994).

“If there’s only one committed member of staff its not enough for the work to survive. In the end they find it too difficult to maintain what they have started. There needs to be a definite commitment in senior management plus a reasonable number of other supporters. It’s the concept of critical mass, it doesn’t have to be everyone but a mass large enough so that the others will sway their way rather than overwhelm them with indifference and hostility”.

(Trainer 1, WMQPEP)

In schools where a critical mass of support is achieved, all or many members of staff use tools that complement peer mediation in their own practice. Hence, the new tools produced by the innovative activity are distributed (Salomon 1993a, Toulmin 1999). In doing so, what entered the traditional activity system as innovative objects become new rules, means of dividing labour and mediational tools (Engestrom 1999a).

In schools where peer mediation has been both successful and sustained, a critical mass of support was achieved, funding dedicated from the school’s budget to ensure the longevity of the scheme and a member of staff assumed responsibility for coordinating the service; all elements essential to sustaining whole-school anti-bullying initiatives such as peer mediation (Cohen 1995, Sharp and Thompson 1994, Stacey et al 1997). The coordinator in this case provides someone to organise rotors, promote the scheme, arouse the interest of other staff members and arrange follow up training to maintain and develop peer mediators’ skills. Conversely, where there is insufficient support from the staff, peer mediation services were not well used by pupils (schools D and H) and in the case of school H, later abandoned. The scheme coordinator at school H describes how the innovative activity was imposed by the headteacher. Staff members were either ‘laissez-faire’ about the new initiative or in some cases, perceived it as an inappropriate solution.

“I think the rest of the staff were not given the option by the headteacher...I know some staff who gave it their best shot and were really behind it. The majority would have been neither for or against it but there would have been a minority who were definitely against it... It was seen as a soft option. Some staff at the school felt that discipline at that time was fairly unruly and needed much firmer measures rather than what was seen as this soft approach.”

(Deputy headteacher, school H)

Such discordances are characteristic of type III conflicts (as depicted in figure 8.5), where the innovative activity meets resistance from the principles of power and control underpinning the traditional activity. It appears that for the traditional activity to be transformed, a critical number of type III conflicts must not occur. Whereas it may be necessary for aspects of cultural practice to change (e.g. division of labour), an innovative activity appears unsustainable if it requires too many subjects to change too much too quickly (Galloway 2003). This might explain why those schools with more closely compatible disciplinary systems are able to support and sustain peer mediation.

At school H, the vertical organisation of staff (evident in decision making) and between teachers and pupils (evident in disciplinary structure) gave peer mediation a poor chance of success. In this case, the headteacher used the peer mediation service as a framing device for imposing her desired model of behaviour management upon the rest of the staff without their support and perhaps little understanding of the extent to which the current model of activity would need to be modified to sustain the service successfully. The headteacher's aims were further compounded by the school's strong classification and framing (Bernstein 2000) between curriculum areas and their delivery by specialist teachers. Peer mediation training was delivered in PHSE lessons via 'circle time' (Mosley 1996, Moss and Wilson 1998), which were structured quite differently to other lessons. Consequently, skills developed in these sessions were highly situated (Brown et al 1989) with little bearing on other areas of school life. The deputy headteacher shared this observation of contradictory practices.

“The aims were isolated...and to try and do it for one hour a week when for the other twenty hours a week, the regime was totally different... teachers reacted to small groups of disruptive children by exerting their influence and control.



Discipline across the school was teacher led and then they came to this one PHSE lesson where that didn't apply, where they were given responsibility for their own behaviour and they didn't cope with it very well."

(Deputy headteacher, school H)

This extract highlights the need for consistency between the principles of power and control underpinning peer mediation and ways of managing behaviour throughout the schools, a significant point revisited in subsequent sections. Consistency can only be achieved by a critical mass (Daniels et al 1998, Sharp and Thompson 1994) of teachers actively supporting the new model of activity. A key component of schools where peer mediation has been successful is the reproduction of the language of peer mediation by teachers.

In chapter five, it was suggested that mediational artefacts play a key role in positioning conflicting parties. As an illustration of this point, chapter seven described how the teacher of the class trained as peer mediators began to use the language of the peer mediation script to regulate pupils' experiences of conflict, which he would have once arbitrated. In doing so, the principles underpinning peer mediation were incorporated into the teacher's communication when managing conflict and re-applied in other settings, processes of internalisation and externalisation (Vygotsky 1978) described previously. Such processes assist the reproduction and distribution of the new tools produced by the innovative activity and their underpinning social relations. Teachers at schools A, B, E and F reported similar observations. Effective peer mediation programmes are supported by adult members of staff reproducing the language of peer mediation in other contexts. As this occurs, the principles of power and control underpinning the traditional activity are modified so that the innovative activity becomes the norm for resolving conflicts. In response to an open-ended question about the impact of the intervention on her own practice, the classteacher at school F comments,

"When on playground duty, I think I've changed, I make sure I listen to both sides of the story even if it means taking them back to my classroom or getting them back at lunchtime."

(Classteacher, school F)

This teacher describes how she employs the dialogic approach of the peer mediation script in her regulation of playground conflicts, where perhaps arbitration would have once taken place. Another teacher describes how aspects of the peer mediation training, including a ‘quiet signal’, have been appropriated into her classroom practice. This meant her management of classroom behaviour became quieter, calmer and more orderly. She would use a ‘quiet signal’ to gain pupils’ attention rather than shouting and reframed classroom activities as co-operative tasks, which are elements of ‘peaceful’ teaching (MacGrath 1998).

“In the circle, they would always put their hand up if they wanted attention and all the children would put their hand up and stop talking, which is a strategy I still use and still works.”

(Classteacher, school E).

The same teacher also describes how her delivery of instructions has changed to incorporate elements of choice and ownership of behaviour, also ventriloquised (Bakhtin 1981, Wertsch 1991) from the training.

“Little phrases that you’d say like, ‘do you think that’s the best behaviour that you could choose’ or giving them the choice. Quite often I will say to them, ‘we are lining up for assembly. Can you make sure that you choose to sit by the right person...’, which are all ideas that have come from peer mediation training and putting emphasis and responsibility on the children so that if things don’t work out, they’ve made that choice and they have to think about the consequences of that choice.”

(Classteacher, school E)

In reframing classroom conduct in terms of pupils’ choices, potential type III conflicts between pupils and classroom rules (figure 5.2a), are expressed as type IV conflicts where pupils deliberate between alternative courses of action. Beforehand, a system of sanctions was administered in response to transgressions, which escalated conflict in the classroom when applied too autocratically or inconsistently (Mitina 1990). The teacher describes how transgressions are now met with a softer approach, characterised by a mutual exploration of the problem and an emphasis on choices. In doing so, the teacher

demonstrates to pupils that the classroom rules are not simply imposed from above but involve a degree of negotiation in both their realisation and maintenance (Visser et al 2000).

When the principles and processes of peer mediation are not reproduced and distributed in any resembling shape or form by actors within schools, the activity of conflict resolution is fragmented. In these schools, peer mediation is often a ‘bolt on feature’ (McNamara 1995, Stacey et al 1997) and dissipates. In school D, different members of staff used different forms of language to regulate conflict, as exemplified in this extract from a school running a peer mediation service with little impact.

“Many though don’t have a clear understanding between roles, arbitration and mediation. Lunchtime supervisors will arbitrate problems and mediators won’t. Pupils don’t always understand the differences between the two approaches.”  
(Classteacher, school D).

This extract demonstrates different social relations and rules being enacted by different personnel in different areas of the school. There is no consistency between the principles of power and control underpinning teachers, lunchtime supervisors and peer mediators approach to resolving conflict. At school D, adults provide arbitration and some pupils provide third-party mediation. These different power relations are expressed in the different forms of communication used by both. To ensure consistency between the principles of peer mediation and all staff members’ management of behaviour, schools A, B and E included lunchtime supervisors in additional staff training, delivered by WMQPEP. Lunchtime supervisors are often neglected from staff training yet play an instrumental role in a school’s realisation of its behaviour policy (Cohen 1995). The effectiveness of the peer mediation service was enhanced by lunchtime supervisors reproducing tools produced during such training. The training provider to school E describes how lunchtime supervisors began to use a ‘conch’ to structure turn talking and listening between disputants on the playground.

“During the course one woman told me that the skills she had been learning on the course, through circle time, were also transferable to the playground. She now carried a ‘talking stone’ in her pocket that helped her and each child to listen to each other and to take turns in talking when there had been a conflict in the playground.”

(Trainer 2, WMQPEP).

Together these extracts show that at those schools where peer mediation is successful, the new model of activity is supported by a ‘critical mass’ of staff members, who as well as modifying their perceptions of power and control also reproduce and distribute the tools produced by the innovative activity.

*b) The reproduction and distribution of new tools by pupils*

The culture and ethos of schools vary considerably from school to school (Cole 1996, Daniels 1996). They do not determine outcomes but provide sets of conditions that may or may not enable or constrain certain ways of thinking and acting. Interview data shows that at schools where the principles of power and control underpinning approaches to the management of relationships are consistent with peer mediation, sets of conditions are created that enable peer mediation to become established and sustained. Pupils are active participants in this process. Limited interview data in this regard shows that schools where peer mediation is successful create a culture in which pupils ‘expect’ to be involved in the process of conflict resolution. Conversely, at school H where approaches to discipline were underpinned by strong classification and framing (Bernstein 2000), peer mediation was perceived by pupils as being non-macho.

At school B the pupils welcomed a weakening in the classification of social relations and an opportunity to play an active role in the resolution of their own conflicts. They came to expect these opportunities from the staff, as this headteacher articulates,

“Its not just teacher lead, all the staff are trained to use the same procedures, so the lunchtime supervisors do the same thing and the children expect that if something’s happened that mediation will be available and they’ll have an input

into that mediation. They don't expect to be told off and that will be the end of everything. They expect to contribute ideas for resolution."

(Headteacher, school B)

Here, the headteacher describes something greater than an initiative 'bolted' onto other activities in school (McNamara 1995, Stacey et al 1997). Instead, she describes how a culture has been created, where the principles and processes of peer mediation underpin the language used by all staff members when dealing with conflict. A culture in which all actors 'expect' to play an active role in conflict resolution. This discourse has been produced and reproduced over considerable time; it is not a 'fad' (Visser et al 2000) but a normalised component of school life.

In contrast, pupils at school D were confused between different communicational practices used by different members of staff (further explicated under theme 4). At this school, the approach to conflict resolution was fragmented, which constrained the implementation of peer mediation as the norm for resolving conflict. At school H, where the service was abandoned, many pupils perceived peer mediation as a non-macho approach to resolving conflicts. When asked about what pupils thought about using peer mediation, the deputy headteacher replied,

"I feel, without evidence, that it was seen as a sign of weakness. We have a predominantly Asian male pupil population...its seen as a weakness to admit 'I've got a problem with another pupil, I will go and talk to a third-party and sort it out'."

(Deputy headteacher, school H)

The deputy headteacher at school H locates the failure of peer mediation, at least partly, with deficiencies in the pupils. However, in the quote on pages 281-282 he recognised how discipline at the school was organised around similar principles, where teachers exercised their power and control to quash disputes. Theorists such as Kenway and Fitzclarence (1997) and Salisbury and Jackson (1996) argue that a relationship exists between such 'macho' values at the institutional level of analysis and their reproduction at the interactional level of analysis. It is not surprising that pupils studying at a school

hitherto regulated by a teacher controlled disciplinary system perceived peer mediation as a 'weak' approach.

The interviewee at school H also felt that the pupils' education prior to the intervention had not sufficiently primed them with the autonomy required by more democratic approaches to resolving conflict. Perhaps the work of projects like WMQPEP need to conduct greater cultural analysis of schools before commencing training in order to assess the appropriate level at which to target interventions. In some schools peer mediation training may not be worthwhile until a supportive environment has been created upon which new skills can be built (Cohen 1995). In the case of school H, much work was needed to prepare pupils and teachers for the changes in the traditional model of activity necessary for peer mediation to be implemented successfully. When both teachers' and pupils' attitudes are entrenched within certain sets of cultural values, preliminary work may be needed on attitudes to power and control, gender and identity, and their relationship to violence (Salisbury and Jackson 1996) before an initiative like peer mediation has any chance of success.

Given these observations, it is a shortcoming in the research design of stage two that pupils were not interviewed, especially at those schools where the intervention was less successful. The 'accounts' from stage two only include the 'perceptions' of teachers, which may be quite different to those of pupils. There are a number of themes identified in preceding text that warrant further research. These observations also suggest that in order to understand conflict within and between activity systems, research needs to account for all the relationships and power dynamics included in these units of analysis (Cole 1996). In doing so, greater understanding may be achieved regarding the conflicts that may exist between dominant ideologies in schools, framing devices used to communicate these, members of staff expected to transmit their associated values and the pupils expected to receive them.

*III) A high profile for the new tools produced by the innovative activity*

In schools where peer mediation was successful, strategies were used to give the peer mediation service kudos and a high profile. This both reproduces and distributes the language of peer mediation and gives the innovative activity status. In schools, A, B, C, E and F there was evidence of various initiatives to raise the profile of peer mediation. Where this did not occur, the service was less effective (School D). Interestingly, at school H, where the peer mediation service was abandoned and a form of assertive discipline (Moss 1998) re-launched in its place, the high profile and consistency of its framing devices were identified as factors key to the success of this alternative. The expected code of conduct for pupils, rewards and sanctions were clearly displayed in each classroom and enforced by teachers consistently. The ‘critical mass’ of teachers unable to support peer mediation gave their support to this initiative, perhaps because for many it embodied principles of power and control more consistent with their views of discipline.

At schools A, B, C, E and F there were strategies to maintain the profile of peer mediation services, including periodic demonstrations, assemblies, parents’ evenings, the involvement of local media, twinning with other schools implementing similar schemes and advertising leaflets/posters. The peer mediators themselves were highly visible and accessible whilst on duty. They ran the service close to the playground and wore caps or braids to identify themselves to other pupils. These devices were regarded as important in sustaining peer mediation by all five WMQPEP trainers interviewed. Teachers interviewed from schools A, B, E and F also valued the role of external trainers, they felt this gave the scheme a higher profile as the skills were perceived by pupils to originate from experts. One teacher described how the impact of the peer mediation service at her school was slow until issues of profile had been resolved.

“At first they were in the library, then there was a lull, hardly anyone used it, so we moved it into the playground with the option of coming inside, which was much better because they were more visible, staff and children used them much more. They had been forgotten about until the profile was upped a bit. And now they’re doing assemblies in KS1 as well because it’s been extended. Its on our

landscape for this year to keep it high profile, regular assemblies for each Year and to promote it at parents evening and through circle time.”

(Classteacher, school F)

To cope with the particular problems of making a peer mediation service visible and accessible in a high school, School G modified the service to its own needs and initiated ‘form buddies’ (Sellman 2000).

“The way it is set up now is better. We still have a drop in centre for counselling and mediation but attached to each form is 2 or 3 ‘form buddies’ trained in these skills, who are immediately accessible and given high profile. They actually do more pastoral work than they do as mediators.”

(Classteacher, school G)

These matters are not trivial as such issues of profile can have a significant impact upon the kudos achieved by a peer mediation service and whether it works in one school but not another. Cremin (2003) has recently completed an audit of fifteen schools where peer mediation has been sustained for several years. In her research, she found that peer mediators at all fifteen schools wear badges, caps or braids, have a display, have run an assembly and had opportunities to work with other children through circle time. In seven of the fifteen schools, peer mediators had provided training to members of staff and/or other children. Such devices serve as means of continuing the high profile of the service, identified as an important component in this and other similar initiatives (Smith and Thompson 1994).

#### *IV) Synergy between the principles of power and control underpinning the innovative activity and other activities in school*

Interviewees from schools A, B, C, E, F and G drew attention to the consistency between peer mediation, the management of discipline and other initiatives already at the school. At these schools, there was synergy between the principles of power and control underpinning traditional and innovative activities. This synergy meant that the traditional



model of resolving conflicts needed little modification to its existing rules and division of labour. In schools with compatible cultural practices, peer mediation was regarded as a component of complementary packages, united by a coherent model of education, which granted children opportunities to develop and apply conflict resolution skills. At school E, a survey of the school, less formal but in many ways similar to Checkpoints (Forum on Children and Violence 1999), was undertaken. The exercise drew attention to the need to create a suitable environment, reception and atmosphere before further initiatives could be implemented. This included behaviourist interventions (refer back to section 2.4.1) such as lowering the ceilings to reduce noise, refurbishment and the introduction of rewards for good behaviour. Such processes can be seen as previous expansive cycles (Engestrom 1999a), which pre-date the interventions of circle-time and peer mediation that followed (see figure 8.2). School F also looked at the environment in relation to experiences of conflict. For example, instructions for listening were made explicit by their prominent display (Mercer 2001).

A number of other strategies that complemented peer mediation were also described by interviewees at all schools apart from D and H. These included peer counsellors (school G), learning mentors (school E) and circle time (all schools except H). Each of these strategies was seen as part of a whole school vision and approach, regarded as essential for developing an effective and consistent model of behaviour management by Daniels et al (1998) and described by the teacher at school E.

“We have our school statement: ‘Our School – Our Future!’ Its very much about children seeing the school not just as a place to come that belongs to someone else but its their place and the fact that everything that goes on here is for their benefit really. So we have a very strong emphasis on inclusion of everybody and children’s opinions being taken into account and positive reinforcement of the good things that go on.”

(Classteacher, school E)

Conversely, the interviewee at school D described a clash between the approaches of peer mediation, his own teaching and the disciplinary structure of the school, as highlighted in sequence C.

**Sequence C:**

Researcher: What are the differences and similarities between the school culture and the intervention?

Teacher: All the systems of reward and punishment are teacher lead and mediation isn't and the two things really are (knocks fists together) going to clash. They're mutually exclusive.

Researcher: Does this cause any problems?

Teacher: I think it does in the establishment of mediation as a means of living peacefully because there's a tradition and expectation that teachers will sort out behaviour problems and mediators are coming from a different perspective, expecting people to sort out their own problems and find their own solutions rather than appealing to an external objective authority.

In sequence C, the teacher identifies a number of 'contradictions' (Engestrom 1998b) that constrain the implementation of the innovative activity. The teacher articulates a role conflict (Calderwood 1989) where the innovative practice of peer mediation and in some ways, his own dialogic approach to managing conflict, clashes with the dominant culture of deterrence and arbitration at the school. These contradictions can be expressed as type III conflicts between the object of the intervention and elements of the traditional activity (as depicted in figure 8.5). The new rules and division of labour produced by peer mediation conflict with those of the current model for managing discipline. Because the principles of power and control underpinning these models of activity are inconsistent, peer mediation fails to become the normalised activity for resolving conflicts. The strong classification and framing (Bernstein 2000) of the traditional approach to discipline translate its power relations into tools that are mutually exclusive with those of peer mediation. Hence, new tools are not reproduced and distributed. Consequently, pupils move between activities at school D that are based upon different power relations and are characterised by distinct discourses and outcomes.

The issues raised in this and previous sections re-invoke Vygotsky's (1987b) distinction between meaning and sense, introduced in section 4.5b. Sequence C suggests that it is not possible to insert a new tool into an activity system without it being subverted by the principles of power and control in operation. Hence, peer mediation in authoritarian cultures is appropriated to assume a much greater disciplinary function or assigned to the boundaries of traditional activity, where it dissipates. If peer mediation is to be implemented in a manner consistent with its underlying philosophy of participation and restoration (Isenhardt and Spangle 2000, Stacey et al 1997) it is essential that there is synergy between the intervention and approaches to behaviour management.

#### *V) Attention to 'challenging' pupils*

Although some schools, E for example, reported how the intervention had an impact on pupils with 'challenging' behaviour, this was generally not the case. The classteacher at school E felt that the inclusive character of 'circle time' (Moss and Wilson 1998) used to deliver peer mediation training, and the way language was used to explore the connections between thinking through choices, feelings, actions and their consequences had a major impact on one of her pupil's behaviour.

"Well, I can think back into the classes I've done it with and say yes definitely. The first class we did it with, there was a boy in there who was lovely but had real behaviour problems. One of these things was that he just couldn't be in a group and he couldn't even sit on a chair in the circle and he was calling out and swinging on his chair and all sorts. The very fact that he was kept in the circle, still included and always spoken to in a nice calm manner and throughout the circle time sessions there was such an improvement in his behaviour. When I started, we had him on a behaviour programme with outside help and by the time I had had him for two years, well he wasn't as good as gold but he was a hundred times better and I'm sure the circle time had a lot to do with that."

(Classteacher, school E).

However, children exhibiting challenging behaviour appeared to benefit less from peer mediation services. The process of peer mediation training pays great attention to

communication (Tyrrell 1995) and those for whom literacy is not a strength may be excluded from its benefits.

“Children with difficulties with language haven’t responded as well because there is an emphasis on language.”

(Headteacher, school A)

Others felt many pupils exhibiting challenging behaviour presented compounded problems (Clarke and Clarke 2000). Thus, training in conflict resolution skills was often seen as too little too late for such pupils (see Guralnick 1989 for a similar argument).

“The training is very effective with the majority of children, even lower ability but there is a tiny percentage who need more and need it earlier. For those who lose their temper before they think of consequences, it didn’t reach.”

(Class teacher, school F)

However, effective provision did not give up on such children (Daniels et al 1998). In schools E and F, where the intervention had some impact on ‘challenging’ pupils, they had been given additional anger management training to supplement the peer mediation input. This provided them with further tools, acknowledged as a strength by this project trainer.

“Sometimes the work is less successful with the very difficult children. Great strides can be made by supporting those few in the class with difficulties with additional anger management and counselling outside of circle time. Children experiencing EBD usually can identify their problems but lack strategies.”

(Trainer 3, WMQPEP)

These citations raise a number of challenges to peer mediation trainers and other educationalists, given the importance placed on mediating tools by Vygotsky (1978, 1981a, 1981b) and emphasised by these extracts. Vygotsky’s (1981a) notion of semiotic mediation posits that society produces tools that are used by individuals to regulate their behaviour from the outside. Hence, children who struggle to internalise the tools produced by others are often excluded from developing culturally more advanced ways of thinking and acting. This argument highlights the need for initiatives such as peer mediation to translate the new social relations created by the innovative activity into tools

and artefacts that all children can use. In an attempt to resolve some of these challenges at school E, peer mediation training involved children writing scripts in their own words, translated into their own language if necessary, and using symbols to illustrate each of its stages.

#### *VI) Attention to sustainability and development*

Sellman (2002) describes a number of issues, which threaten the sustainability of peer mediation schemes. There are a number of ways in which schemes can dissipate. The most frequent two reasons are when a scheme loses its momentum and another is when trained pupils leave the school. The first is prevented by the characteristics of high profile schemes (theme 3) and the second raises further issues of division of labour. A common loss of trained pupils occurs when they leave their school and particularly as they move from primary to secondary school. When this happens, skilled peer mediators can leave their primary school with no one to replace them and then enter a secondary school where there is no opportunity for them to maintain their skills. Sellman (2000) describes a liaison scheme between a secondary school and its feeder primaries, which attempted to avoid this.

Interviewees from schools A, B, D, E, F and G, which have successfully sustained peer mediations schemes over a number of years, viewed the service as an integral part of wider school change rather than just an additional 'bolt-on' feature (McNamara 1995, Stacey et al 1997), which required some thought to sustainability. In doing so, these schools demonstrate commitment to the longevity of the scheme and the principle of giving pupils greater responsibilities in resolving their own conflicts. At these schools, pupils were trained so they had at least 18 months attendance remaining at their school to be peer mediators before leaving and helped train younger replacements. In this sense, classification between teachers and pupils was further weakened and classification between pupils acting as mediators and other pupils was strengthened as peer mediators

took on roles in training others. Other initiatives were also used to sustain the scheme. These included giving the scheme a high profile and visibility as already discussed.

A key component of sustainability is the internalisation of aspects of the new model of activity (peer mediation) into the schools existing procedures and policies on related matters, e.g. behaviour management, lunchtime provision. This aids the process of normalisation, as what was once an innovative object becomes a new rule or means of dividing labour within traditional and other activities (Engestrom 1999a, 1999b). As this happens, new behaviour becomes embedded in the cultural practices (or structuration) of the school and is reproduced (Giddens 1984), as this headteacher describes.

“Peer mediation is part of our PHSE programme but teachers feel it appropriate to model responses to conflicts explicitly at all times, the mediation process. Because we’ve been doing it for quite a long time, it’s become part of the practice of the school. So, its actually become embedded into our policies and the way we teach. It is now difficult to pick something out and say this has had this effect. The major effect is that it is there, implicit in the way we teach and its part of the school ethos.”

(Headteacher, school B).

Broadwood (2000) describes interventions as most effective when they are delivered in staged approaches rather than as quick fix solutions. Such a process is aided by an ongoing relationship between schools and training agencies, where the school gradually takes ownership of the process. Sustainability does not necessarily imply a singular route of internalisation (Engestrom 1999a, 2001). Schools, their populations and other interacting activity systems that shape practices in schools all continue to develop. Hence, successful interventions are flexible and adapt alongside schools. This process may involve the school making further modifications to the new model of activity in order to ensure its longevity. Observations of this process are reminiscent of Tomasello’s (1999) ‘ratchet effect’ and Engestrom’s (1999b) theorisation of the further expansion of objects, which draws upon Vygotsky’s (1978) notions of internalisation and externalisation. Over time, it may be appropriate to replace the new model of activity with a culturally more advanced alternative (Engestrom 1999a, 2001). This project trainer acknowledges the need for the innovative activity to be both sustained and developed,

“There’s got to be a key teacher and also a progression of skills, they’ve got to have a plan for how they see the work ongoing, it’s interesting at school E, where they say “and next year...”, where input from the agency is seen as an intrinsic part of their development. Where they don’t see it as a one-off or a bolt on. Schools see the work as a relationship with the project, rather than “we’ve done that now”, because schools are transitory populations and they move on.”

(Trainer 2, WMQPEP)

At a number of schools, the peer mediation service had been modified to respond to particular problems and needs. At school E, the intervention had been expanded to incorporate anger management training for those it was less effective with. At school A, the process was modified to include greater modelling by teachers because of the young age of its participants. Conversely, the process at school G had been expanded and modified to give greater pastoral responsibilities to pupils. Such processes suggest that sustaining peer mediation is greater than the modification of social relations and tool production but involves schools reproducing and continuing to modify cultural artefacts in light of the developing needs of the school (Engestrom 2002, Tomasello 1999).

Themes 1-6 show that schools where peer mediation is successful are characterised by teachers modifying their perceptions of power and control, reproducing and distributing ‘high profile’ tools in ways that are inclusive and adapt to the changing needs of the school. These themes can be understood as processes that transformed elements of the traditional activity to give greater responsibilities to pupils. In doing so, a type IV conflict cycle is completed. Where these themes were present, a number of significant outcomes for pupils and teachers were identified. These are presented in an order that emphasises how the new social relations created by peer mediation produced new forms of communication and psychological outcomes.

*VII) Greater group cohesion/ a shift from coordination to communication for peer mediators.*

Section 7.6.3 described how peer mediation training resulted in the production of a shared object, which had an effect on group cohesion. In doing so, the relationships between fellow peer mediators changed from coordination to communication (Engestrom et al 1997, also depicted in figure 4.10). Schools A, B, E, F and G also reported that the training process of peer mediation, where successful, appears to have a cohesive effect on the group trained. There are two potential components to this transformation. One, peer mediation training, which involved developing skills in affirmation, communication and cooperation (Rawlings 1996), created new social relations where pupils were encouraged to work harmoniously together. Two, peer mediation training produced new mediational tools that pupils could use to help them get on with each other. A further dividend of this transformation was the reduction of type III conflicts, particularly clashes between pupil actions and classroom rules (figure 5.2a).

“A fractious class really came together as a unit in doing something creative, enjoyable and supportive together. When we started, those opportunities were quite rare.”

(Classteacher, school E)

“From, my own personal point of view, classroom atmosphere changed. To realising there’s another way to solve a problem. I don’t think we as a school give them in the past enough so that they know that there’s a different way to solve a problem. I think all three classrooms you could hear children say we learnt that we could do this, well we could say sorry, and different alternatives. Not just with conflict resolution but other things in the classroom. The way they spoke to each other changed, they were more positive about each other, changing from ‘someone’s pinched my pencil’ to ‘has anyone seen my pencil?’ Not always thinking there’s a negative reason for what has happened. Importantly, they’ve seen that there is alternatives.”

(Classteacher, school F)

A significant component of generating this cohesion was credited to the development of a group contract during peer mediation training (see section 7.5), to which every pupil made a contribution. This represents a shift from the teacher identifying and enforcing



classroom rules (strong classification and framing) to a process that involved pupils in both eliciting the kinds of behaviour necessary to work together as a group and taking greater responsibilities in maintaining their own rules (weaker classification and framing). Such a process embodies both the production and sharing of a group's knowledge (Toulmin 1999). The production of a group contract represented an object shared between pupils and adults, which related individual's choices to group performance and became a tool on continuous display to regulate the group. The fact it had been co-designed and interrogated by the pupils themselves gave it greater credence. At school A, the class told their mascot how they would like their group to behave.

“This was done via a mascot, tell Ivan how you want the class to be. The strength being that the ideas came from the whole class. Then when something happens, behaviour could be referred to as something the whole class did not want. This was much more powerful than it being imposed by the teacher only.”

(Headteacher, school A)

These processes represent the production of cultural artefacts that translate certain sets of social relations into tools (Bernstein 2000), which pupils use to regulate themselves. The extracts from this section demonstrate that rules designed, realised and upheld by pupils themselves can be very effective tools in creating cohesion and cooperation (Visser et al 2000).

### *VIII) Reductions in the frequency and intensity of type I conflicts*

Although the peer mediation service studied in stage 1 yielded no measurable decrease in behavioural conflicts (types I-III) using the data collection tools chosen, interviewees at schools A, B, C, E, F and G stated that the peer mediation service had an impact on the frequency and intensity of inter-pupil confrontations (type I conflicts - figure 5. 1). Interview data highlights how the division of labour for managing conflict changed at these schools in a way depicted in figure 7.6. As part of this process, some power was transferred from teachers to peer mediators, who used a framing device (the peer

mediation script – appendix 4) to involve other pupils in finding their own solutions to conflicts.

“I wouldn’t say it was dramatic because hopefully we were doing the right things anyway...but the lower level niggles, that previously went straight to the teacher and tended to take up a lot of your time, that level has gone away quite a lot because children know they can go to other children.”

(Classteacher, school C)

“When I’ve been on duty there hasn’t been a great deal of anything major that wasn’t sorted out on the playground by the kids themselves. They know they’ve got people to go to and they know they’ve got mediators and I think that has cut down on the sort of trivial tit for tat and tale-telling that used to be around.”

(Classteacher, school E)

“I would say calmer, the school is calmer at different times of the day. The peer mediation has helped a lot. Children see that there is someone there to help rather than needing to go to an adult where they might get into trouble. The peer mediators give them support rather than thinking, ‘we can’t solve this’.”

(Classteacher, school F)

“The Head of Year observed that the 6<sup>th</sup> form mediators were intercepting an abundance of minor problems, that were no longer being passed upwards to him.”

(Classteacher, school G)

These extracts support the argument made in this and the previous chapter that such transformation represents a weakening of the classification and framing (Bernstein 2000) between teachers and pupils because i) arbitration was used less frequently, and ii) some teachers’ communicational practices became more dialogic (section 2.4.2a) when responding to conflict. The transformation also represents a strengthening of the classification between pupils acting as peer mediators and other pupils, as when peer mediators are on duty they have a clear role in assisting other pupils in conflict. The framing device used in peer mediation, the script (appendix 4), whereas less formal than arbitration sets out clear rules and sequences for pupils to follow and is hence more strongly framed than conflicts resolved by negotiation alone (Cohen 1995).

*IX) Shifts in the structure of communication*

At schools where peer mediation has been successful over a long period of time, new social relations have been created that produce new forms of communication (Bernstein 2000, Cole and Engestrom 1993). By collaborating with WMQPEP to implement peer mediation training, the activity of conflict resolution may become the subject of scrutiny. In examining the role of pupils in regulating the resolution of their own conflicts, teachers began to see their own practice, pupils and conflict in new ways. Interviewees at schools A, B, E and F gave evidence of transformation in communicational practices as the traditional object (current model of activity resolving conflict in school) was expanded.

“In the classroom, I think I’m more positive because I’m finding ways to stop a behaviour rather than saying, ‘put your pencil down, put your pencil down...’. If there is an issue with a few children, I reframe it as a whole class challenge, ‘when I say stop, I want to see if the whole class can do it together and if they can we can have a reward’. I tend to address behaviour as a whole class issue or whole class target. If you give them a whole class target they tend to support each other reaching it.”

(Classteacher, school F)

In this extract, the classteacher describes how she uses affirmation as a motivator for encouraging cooperation. She then describes how practices, which may have caused teacher-pupil conflict (type I and III conflicts) in the past are avoided by the insertion of a shared object, a ‘class challenge’. According to her account, both the material and symbolic nature of her classroom has been modified by processes of ‘internalisation and externalisation’ (Toulmin 1999, Vygotsky 1978). She has appropriated cultural artefacts produced by the innovative activity and reproduced them in her own classroom practice. This demonstrates further how the structure of the traditional and other activities in school have been transformed by the implementation of a new model of activity (peer mediation), as in the resolution of a type IV conflict between alternative models of activity.

In another school, the intervention was one of several modifications to social relations in schools that resulted in a gradual shift in discourse. The structure of communication changed from an emphasis on exclusion and causality ‘in’ the child (Thomas and Glenny 2000) to an emphasis on inclusion and how systemic organisation could develop the child.

“Before we started, five years ago, there was much more a culture of we sorted things out. Since then, it has been that the people involved in that situation sort it out. It shocked me when I arrived, teachers would say, ‘Well he shouldn’t be in our school, she doesn’t know how to behave, we shouldn’t have to put up with this, this is not our job!’” The feeling was that anything out of the norm shouldn’t be catered for by the school. I don’t think you’d hear anything like that now. The culture of the school is now, ‘how can we help every child at our school, and what strategies can we set up to help them and if that doesn’t work, what else can we try.’ Rather than, ‘that didn’t work, we tried so that’s it’.”

(Headteacher, school B)

*X) Extended thought processes and shifts in conflict modality from types I-III to IV*

The successful implementation of a peer mediation service creates new sets of social relations, which produce new forms of communication. A crucial component of this process of transformation is the production of new semiotic devices (Vygotsky 1978), which enable new thought processes to regulate responses to conflict that previously may have been more immediate and physical (Goleman 1996). This can be characterised as a shift in conflict modality from behavioural-interactional/structural conflicts (types I-III, figures 5.1-5.2c) to conceptual conflicts (type IV, figure 5.3), where alternative courses of action are considered. In schools A, B and F, the teachers interviewed described how they had experienced pupils extending their thought processes when in conflict. This had two manifestations. First, the use of new tools by pupils allowed greater time for thought processes to enter the conflict situation and to link their actions and thoughts with other people’s feelings. An example of this was the use of ‘Anger Rules’ (Douglas 1999) to insert a thinking stage between provocation and retaliation. Second, these thought

processes included a choice of behaviour from an expanded range of possible actions (Engestrom 1999a, 1999b). The headteacher at school A comments,

“A big problem here, is that the children’s background encourages them to think of physical retaliation as their first response. If you said ‘why did you do that?’, expecting some deep rooted problem, he’ll say ‘he was in front of me, or he looked at me’. We noticed that the impact of the course and the work teachers did before and after could extend the pause, the gap between action and reaction.”

(Headteacher, school A)

The production and use of these new tools places greater emphasis on pupils’ ownership of their own behaviour and the choices at their disposal, as the headteacher of school B and a classteacher from school F indicate.

“It was an alternative way to get children to look at the problem they’re experiencing, even if they thought they were innocent, to get them to see that they’ve played a role in the conflict and that they have to play a part in its resolution, take ownership of the problem... The main strength has been getting them to realise that they have choices, rather than everything’s done to them.”

(Headteacher, school B)

“I think it was because the children were Year 5 they started to see how their behaviour impacted on those around them. Because we hadn’t done much, I don’t think that some of them even realised that, that something they did affected how they worked or how they felt about themselves. I would say a lot of our children are ‘blaming’ children, if they lose something they automatically say ‘it’s been stolen!’ rather than ‘I can’t find it’. So that’s the first reaction for a lot of them and to try and look at something from somebody else’s viewpoint and to look at solutions other than their immediate anger or their immediate reaction, I think a lot of them didn’t really think there was an option to stand back and to look at something from someone else’s point of view. It impacted on them.”

(Classteacher, school F)

Again, both of these teachers describe a transition from instances where certain events would have led to an immediate and direct confrontation, characteristic of a type I conflict, to new psychological responses to the same stimuli. These new responses are enabled by mediational tools that pupils use to reframe conflict as a problem with a range of alternative responses to choose from, as in a type IV conflict. Significant components

in this transformation are new forms of social relations and cultural artefacts (such as the peer mediation script) produced by the innovative activity.

The interview data presented in this chapter demonstrates that those schools where peer mediation was successful modified perceptions of power and control to give greater responsibilities to pupils. The new social relations created by this transformation were translated into new mediational tools that when reproduced and distributed by the whole school community resulted in an expanded range of possible actions (Engestrom 1999a) for actors in conflict to choose from. In doing so, peer mediation at many schools was associated with a reduction in type I conflicts particularly, which were reframed as type IV conflicts between alternative courses of action.

### **8.3 Summary, further findings and critical commentary**

Chapter eight has presented data derived from stage two of the empirical research design, which set out an analysis of:

- i) the processes involved in the longstanding transformation of conflict resolution at eight schools where peer mediation services had been implemented in the past; and
- ii) how such interventions transformed social relations to produce new forms of communication and psychological outcomes for pupils and teachers at some of these schools.

The analysis contained within chapter eight draws upon three sources of data. These were:

- ‘checkpoints’ (Forum on Children and Violence 1999 and appendix 1a),
- school organisation and pedagogic practice questionnaires (Daniels et al 1996, Markham 1999, and appendix 1b), and
- interview data.

The Checkpoints questionnaire (Forum on Children and Violence 1999 and appendix 1a) was administered to ascertain the degree to which principles of non-violence informed each school's relationship with the community, values, organisation, environment, curriculum and staff training. The completed questionnaires showed a clear relationship between the number of checkpoints in place or proposed at each school and the status of their peer mediation service. The two schools (D and H) with the least number of checkpoints in place were also those schools where peer mediation services were least successful, and in the case of school H abandoned. Although the Checkpoints questionnaire (Forum on Children and Violence 1999 and appendix 1a) provides little information regarding the precise nature of cultural practices in these schools (see Ratner 1997, chapter three and the critical commentary of the previous chapter for similar criticisms of such methods), the data does suggest a link between schools where principles of non-violence permeate a 'whole-school approach' (Smith and Thompson 1994) and the success of peer mediation given greater elucidation by interview data.

The school organisation and pedagogic practice questionnaire (Daniels et al 1996, Markham 1999, and appendix 1b) was administered to ascertain whether there was a relationship between the translation of principles of power and control into organisational and communicational discourses (Bernstein 2000) and the status of peer mediation services at each school. Whereas questionnaire data yielded no clear relationship in this regard, perhaps for reasons discussed in the text, interview data was illuminating. The principles of power and control underpinning traditional and innovative activities was highlighted as a significant issue by interviewees at all schools regarding whether peer mediation became a normalised part of school life or not.

The processes involved in the transformation of the traditional activity can be summarised as:

- Peer mediation services require a shift in the division of labour and rules for resolving conflict, where teachers modify their perceptions of power and control to give pupils greater autonomy in this activity. This shift in the division of labour can be

understood as a weakening of the classification and framing (Bernstein 2000) between teachers and pupils and a strengthening of classification and framing between pupils and other pupils acting as peer mediators. This is because a new set of social relations is created that offers a median between the formal activity of arbitration and the less formal activity of negotiation for resolving conflicts (Cohen 1995, also depicted in figure 7.6). When members of staff did not modify their perceptions of power and control, a type III conflict existed between the new model of activity and the division of labour of the traditional activity (figure 8.5), which constrained its transformation.

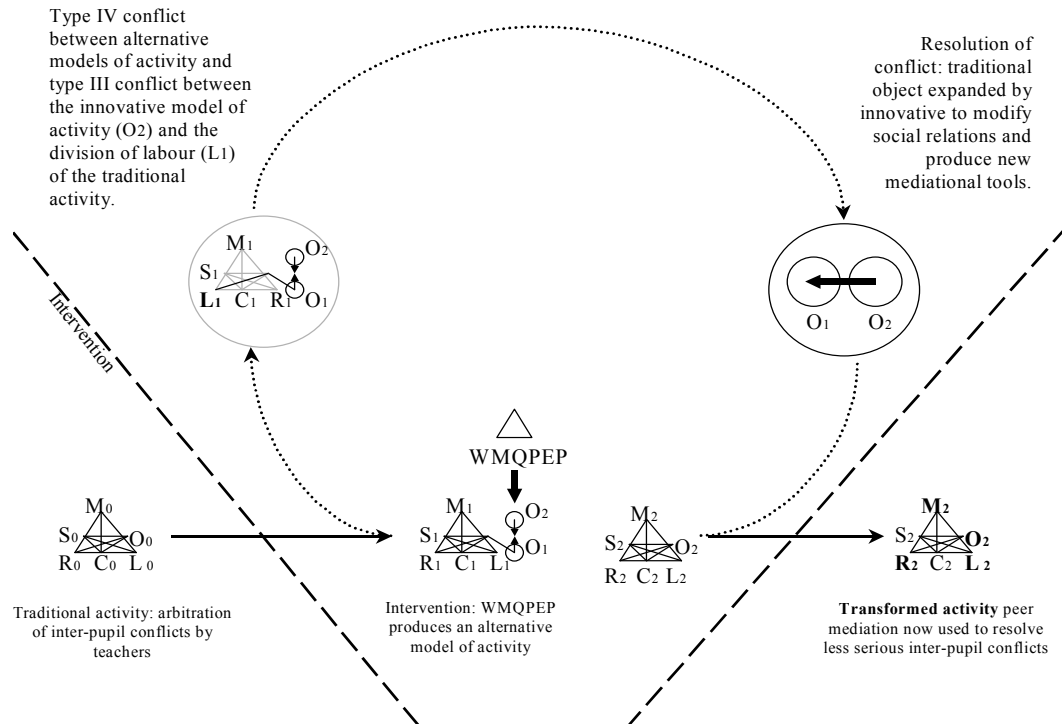
- Effective peer mediation services require considerable staff/pupil support for the new social relations and tools produced by the innovative activity to be reproduced and distributed throughout the school. The transformation of the traditional activity was enabled by a ‘critical mass’ (Daniels et al 1998, Smith and Thompson 1994) of staff members supporting the new model of activity. This was enabled further by members of staff reproducing the discourse of peer mediation and its underlying social relations in their own practice. In doing so, cultures were created where pupils ‘expected’ a role in the process of conflict resolution. Conversely, where this transformation did not occur, the activity of peer mediation was distinct from the traditional activity and thus its principles and practices were highly ‘situated’ (Brown et al 1992).
- In order for the new mediational tools produced by the innovative activity to be distributed (Hutchins 1991, Moll et al 1993, Resnick et al 1991, Salomon 1993) they need to be given a high profile (Mercer 2001). At schools where peer mediation was successful, peer mediators were highly visible and the status of the service was raised by a number of strategies, including demonstrations, assemblies, posters and displays.
- The long-term impact of the intervention was increased by attention to the inclusion of more ‘challenging’ pupils, strategies for sustainability and further modification of the new model of activity according to cultural needs.

At schools where these cultural practices/processes were reported, the following outcomes for pupils and teachers were indicated:



- Greater cohesion between members of the group trained as peer mediators, characterised by a shift in social relations from coordination to communication (Engestrom et al 1997, also depicted in figure 4.10). Credit for this process was given to the development of a) interpersonal skills acquired during peer mediation training, and b) the production of shared objects. One example of a shared object produced during peer mediation training was the ‘group-contract’, which gave pupils a greater role in negotiating, realising and maintaining rules (Visser et al 2000).
- New social relations created by the innovative activity resulted in the transformation of communicational practices over time. For example, there was a shift from an emphasis on exclusion to inclusion at school B, and from teacher arbitration to more dialogic conflict resolution strategies at all schools apart from D and H.
- A reduction in both the frequency and escalation of type I conflicts. Teachers reported that these were ‘intercepted’ by peer mediators.
- The new social relations created by peer mediation produced new semiotic tools (Engestrom 1999b, Vygotsky 1978, 1981a) with reported significant outcomes for teachers and pupils. As a result, many individuals were able to take greater time to consider an expanded range of possible reactions to conflict. This transformation can be understood as a shift in the modality of conflict from types I-III, characterised by direct confrontations, to type IV, where alternative courses of action are considered instead.

The processes and outcomes involved in implementing peer mediation services in schools outlined in this and the previous chapter can be mapped onto a conflict cycle shown in figure 8.6, which can then be examined.



**Figure 8.6: The processes and outcomes of implementing a peer mediation service**

Figure 8.6 provides an initial answer to the research question: ‘In what ways can CHAT illuminate the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services for interpersonal conflict resolution in schools?’ The processes involved can be depicted as a type IV conflict cycle between traditional and innovative models of activity for resolving conflict. Figure 8.6 shows that the traditional model of activity (arbitration of pupils’ conflicts by teachers) is transformed over time. By intervention, WMQPEP produces an alternative model of activity: peer mediation. The contrasting principles of power and control underpinning these activities may result in a number of other conflicts. For example, a type III conflict between the innovative model of activity and the rules and division of labour of the traditional activity. If such issues are resolved, involving themes 1-6 presented in this chapter, new social relations are created. The transformed activity system results in significant psychological outcomes for pupils and teachers. Chiefly, these include a reduction in behavioural-interactional type I conflicts, and a shift in the modality of conflict from types I-III to IV, where an ‘expanded range of alternative

actions' (Engestrom 1999b) are considered in place of direct confrontation. Figure 8.6 also suggests that many interventions, including peer mediation, fail or are not sustained (Visser et al 2000) because they do not become a reproducible component of the traditional activity. Transformation is not sustainable if fundamental differences between the principles of power and control underpinning traditional and innovative activities are not resolved.

Examination of figure 8.6 suggests that the types of conflict modelled in this thesis have provided some illumination of processes of transformation in schools and reported experiences of conflict at the interactional level of analysis. However, the empirical enquiries would have benefited from more careful attention to how such modalities of conflict could have been more specifically recorded at the interactional level of analysis, other than in recollection during interviews. Given the historical nature of the analysis of stage two, it is justifiable to have used interview data to account for both processes of institutional and individual transformation. Whereas interviews with teachers have provided informative commentary on processes of institutional transformation, analysis of such processes at the interactional level of analysis was impoverished to some degree by the absence of pupil voices. Greater elucidation regarding the transformation of psychological phenomena may have been achieved by conducting pupil as well as teacher interviews, perhaps using an approach such as personal construct analysis (e.g. Smith, Harre and van Langenhove 1995) to interview pupils either side of peer mediation training.

Many of the data collection tools used in both chapters seven and eight have retained an occupation with the objective identification of cultural antecedents and outcomes before and after intervention, which have proved too abstract, static and superficial to inform a cultural-historical analysis (Cole 1996, Ratner 1997). The use of questionnaires, rating scales and indexes in this thesis has only enabled limited insight in contrast to interview data. Many of these devices make the erroneous assumption that there is a direct relationship between the factors they measure and outcomes of peer mediation training

(Johnson and Johnson 1996). Furthermore, the way such devices have been used can be criticised for dissecting the ‘culture’ of each school in a way that expresses a complex interplay of factors as independent variables (Ratner 1997, Toomela 2001).

A CHAT approach to research advocates that human development is best understood by observing and provoking new behaviour in authentic settings using data collection tools that aid understanding of these processes (Engestrom 1999a). Stage one provided an analysis largely consistent with the epistemology of CHAT (Cole 1996, Engestrom 1999a) and strong in terms of internal validity (LeCompte and Goetz 1982) because an actual activity system undergoing transformation was entered and the spatial/temporal order of events investigated at close hand. There was also a strong level of agreement between interviewees. However, stage two is both less consistent with the epistemology of CHAT and weaker on validity. Although the historical analysis of longstanding transformation at comparatory cases elucidated processes not easily identifiable by investigating transformation in one setting over a short period of time, the cultural analysis of these processes would have perhaps benefited from less breadth and greater depth.

Alternative approaches include replicating stage one at other activity systems (Engestrom 1999a). Although this would have required considerable resources, such an approach may have provided greater description of the cultural factors that enable and constrain the transformation of activity. Another alternative would have been to select the sample of schools for stage two more ‘purposively’ (Robson 1993) and in a manner that enabled a more rigorous interrogation of the themes identified in chapter seven. The status of peer mediation services is one example of possible selection criteria. For example, a school running peer mediation successfully for some time (e.g. school B) could have been contrasted against a school where it had not been successful (e.g. school H). A deeper analysis would also have allowed the voices of many more key individuals, particularly pupils, to be included. Either of these approaches would have been more consistent with a CHAT approach to research, as outlined in chapter six.

The writer's epistemological journey, development of a research question, answer to this question and an examination of its standing are the subject of a final summary, critical commentary and conclusions in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 9: FINAL SUMMARY, CRITICAL COMMENTARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

Chapter nine is structured into four sub-sections. It begins by outlining how the writer's epistemological position developed over the course of the study in a manner consistent with CHAT. The theoretical approach, methodologies and findings of the thesis are then summarised and critiqued in turn.

### **9.1 Epistemological journey**

This thesis charts an epistemological journey, where the research question itself has been modified and refined as familiarity and expertise with the area of study has developed. The initial research question was:

‘Does peer mediation training by WMQPEP reduce levels of conflict in schools?’

The initial response to this question was to conduct a statistical evaluation of peer mediation training based on incidents of violence observed before, during and after the intervention. One approach considered was applied behaviour analysis (Baer et al 1968, Merrett and Wheldall 1978). However, a number of epistemological issues were raised in the literature reviewed by this thesis regarding such approaches. First, it is perhaps erroneous to assume a direct relationship between peer mediation training and incidents of violence (Johnson and Johnson 1996). Second, the concept of conflict is dualistic (Easterbrook et al 1992). It is a phenomenon that is both physical and psychological. Counting acts of violence as if these are indicators of conflict in general makes a number of ontological assumptions about the nature of the phenomenon and epistemological assumptions regarding its scientific study (Ratner 1997). Third, the presence or absence of a significant correlation between the implementation of a peer mediation service and

instances of violence would provide little information regarding how the intervention had or had not been successful (Miles and Huberman 1994, Visser et al 2000).

Such an approach to research makes the assumption that human behaviour can be studied in ways comparable with the natural sciences (Robson 1993). This approach, aligned with positivism, assumes that knowledge of the world can be deduced from observation with the senses. Positivism commonly, but not exclusively, privileges numerate data collection methods to record the 'strength' of a variable to test whether it is significantly correlated to another (Cohen and Manion 1994). However, Ratner (1997) argues that such an approach makes the ontological assumption that overt acts of behaviour indicate the presence of psychological phenomena and the epistemological assumption that the scientific study of such phenomena can be undertaken by direct observation. Furthermore, the cultural nature of behaviour is excluded from the analysis by treating these 'variables' as universal in different contexts. Whereas positivism attempts to identify causal relationships between outcomes and interventions by statistical association, Ratner (1997) argues the basis of these associations can be unreliable and provide little information of the cultural nature of their relationship.

Given these criticisms, chapter three argued the need to identify a theoretical approach that provided the concepts and methods to undertake analysis of cultural processes. The research question was reframed in this regard to question 'what are the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services in schools?' Chapter three also argued that the theoretical approach needed to begin to develop an answer to this question would have to resolve issues of structure and agency (Hay 1995). This argument was based upon the need for a theoretical account of the relationship between individuals and social structures in which transformation of these structures by intervention and psychological outcomes could be understood as interrelated processes. In search of a suitable theoretical approach, a number of approaches within the social sciences (May 1996) were reviewed.

A suitable theoretical approach was found in CHAT. Based upon the intellectual legacy of Vygotsky (1978, 1987b), CHAT presents a cultural theory of mind that refutes the strict separation of the individual and the social. Developments of CHAT (Leontiev 1978, 1981, Engestrom 1998b, 1999a) offer an approach that theorises human activity as a collective process mediated by culturally produced tools and artefacts. These both shape the consciousness of individuals and are used by individuals to shape their material and social world. Such a cultural theory of mind postulates that the attribution of causality is problematic because of the dialectical nature of human behaviour. Cultural activity and psychological phenomena are entwined. Whereas cultural activity may inspire and organise psychological phenomena, the two are inseparable. Daniels (2001a) outlines that psychological phenomena are the subjective processes of cultural activity and cultural activity is the practical objectified realisation of psychological phenomena. Hence it is difficult to attribute one factor as the cause of another because the two depend upon and sustain one another.

This postulation results in a radical shift in approach to research. The relationship between individuals, conflict resolution in schools and interventions such as peer mediation can be understood as processes in which elements of activity including new mediational artefacts/tools are culturally produced. The subject of research then becomes the study of processes of social and individual transformation, which include the structure of the social world in the analysis and the potentially conflictual nature of social practices. The societal nature of activity is emphasised by showing how elements of activity are produced by interacting activity systems (Engestrom 1998b, 1999a, Tolman 1999, also depicted in figure 7.8).

Understanding these processes is further enhanced by Engestrom's (1987, 1999a, 1999b) theory of expansive learning. Engestrom (1999a, figure 4.7) shows how activity can be transformed over time when an object is expanded to incorporate an innovative object produced by agents within an activity system questioning aspects of existing practice and/or a culturally more advanced object produced by networked activity systems. Expansive learning represents an elaborated cultural theory of mind in which learning



and transformation is a collective and unpredictable process (Cole and Engestrom 1993) and an epistemological approach in which to locate and investigate processes of social and individual transformation. Analysis of the structure of the social world in which transformation may take place and the nature of conflicting social practices are given a fuller theoretical account by incorporating Bernstein's (2000) attention to the nature of tool production and the writer's own models of conflict (figures 4.1-4.3) into the theoretical approach respectively. The marriage of these approaches provides the writer with an analytical framework in which the relationship between activities such as peer mediation training and conflict resolution in schools can be understood and investigated. The research question subsequently taken into empirical investigations was reformulated as: 'in what ways can CHAT illuminate the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services for interpersonal conflict resolution in schools?' The nature and utility of CHAT for such an investigation is further explicated in the next section.

The epistemological position reached at the end of the thesis is consistent with that of CHAT. This is built upon an ontological view of human activity as collective and mediated. To understand the cultural and historical nature of the production of elements of activity, activity theorists advocate the study of human development in authentic settings (Cole 1996). This methodology is founded upon Marx's (Kamenka 1983, Jensen 1999) notion that it is not the role of philosophers to interpret or predict the world but to change it, developed by Vygotsky (1978, 1981b) into a genetic approach to understanding cultural development. Research concerns itself with the reconstruction of historical behaviour, the observation of rudimentary behaviour and the provocation and observation of new behaviour (Engestrom 1999a). Included in this analysis are the structures of the social world, notably its objects, rules, division of labour and mediational tools/artefacts. Despite limitations regarding some of the methods used during data collection, the empirical research design of this thesis and analysis drawn from data are both informed by the principles and concepts of CHAT respectively. The merits and limitations of the thesis are now critiqued within summaries of its theoretical approach, methodologies and findings.

## 9.2 Theoretical approach

The research question, as it stood at the end of chapter three:

‘What are the processes and outcomes of implementing peer mediation services for interpersonal conflict resolution in schools?’

suggests an investigation of the relationship between the organisation of social relations in schools and the creation of new psychological possibilities for individuals. To proceed in answering this research question, the thesis argued the need to identify, and perhaps develop, a suitable theoretical approach. This endeavour was problematic because social science, including conflict theory, tends to separate micro and macro levels of analysis (Wertsch et al 1996). Inherent in many of these approaches are a number of assumptions about human agency that pose further difficulties. In light of these limitations, a theoretical approach was required, which a) integrated levels of analysis and b) resolved the traditional bipolar position regarding human agency: controlled by self versus controlled by society.

The first requirement was necessary because the implementation of peer mediation services in schools may involve transformation at both individual and institutional levels of analysis (Griffith 1996). The second requirement was necessary because human agency can be understood as being neither completely free nor totally constrained (May 1996). Both of these requirements continued to inform the research design and empirical investigations. From a number of alternative theoretical approaches reviewed in chapter four, CHAT (Cole 1996, Engstrom 1998a, Engstrom et al 1999, Chaiklin et al 1999, Chaiklin 2001a) was selected and its merits and limitations critiqued in detail. A significant portion of the thesis was dedicated to reviewing, selecting and developing a theoretical approach. This endeavour was justified because the concepts and methodologies of CHAT informed the design and analysis of empirical investigations and ultimately the conclusions drawn from these data (Clough and Nutbrown 2002).

CHAT, as developed by Cole (1996) and Engestrom (1998b, 1999a,) amongst others, advances Vygotsky's (1978, 1981a) original model of mediated action (figure 4.1) into a model of collective activity, the 'activity system' (figure 4.4). The activity system is a useful unit of analysis for understanding the structure of a number of activities in schools, including approaches to conflict resolution. The model shows how relationships between a subject of analysis (pupils, teachers or a sub-group of the activity system) and an object (raw material, problem) at which activity is directed are mediated by culturally produced artefacts and tools, particularly language. The concept of 'mediation' is essential in integrating the individual and the societal, and positing human beings in a dialectical relationship where they both shape and are shaped by the world in which they act. The transformation of an object of activity into an outcome is a collective practice both enabled and constrained by rules and a division of labour (Engestrom 1998b, Leontiev 1981). The 'rules' refer to the explicit and implicit regulations and norms for framing actions and interactions within the activity system. The 'division of labour' refers both to the horizontal and vertical classification of tasks and roles undertaken by actors within the activity system.

The activity system is further extended to incorporate the production of elements of the activity under study by interacting activity systems (figure 4.5). Whereas the production of an outcome is given a theoretical account within CHAT, Daniels (1993, 2001a, 2001b) argues that theory regarding the production of tools is limited. Understanding of this process is developed by incorporating the work of Bernstein (1975, 2000) into the theoretical approach. Bernstein (2000) explicates how principles of power and control underpinning an activity, represented by its rules and division of labour, can be strongly/weakly classified and framed to produce principles of communication with different psychological outcomes.

The utility of this extended unit of analysis is that activity systems can be used to depict the relationship between peer mediation training provided by WMQPEP and the activity of conflict resolution in schools, referred to as innovative and traditional activities respectively. Understanding of this relationship is enhanced by the writer's own

development of four models to represent different forms of conflict. These were derived from Engestrom's (1998b) four levels of 'contradictions' and are placed onto a time framework. The relationship between innovative and traditional activities can then be understood initially as a type IV conflict (figure 5.8). This represents a clash of alternative objects, in this case alternative models of activity: the traditional model of resolving conflict in schools (e.g. arbitration) against an innovative model of activity (e.g. peer mediation). The work of Bernstein (2000) is instrumental in highlighting that these alternative models of activity do not represent superficial collisions of practices or 'contradictions' (Engestrom 1998b, 1999a, 1999b) but are underpinned by fundamentally different principles of power and control.

The combination is a theoretical and analytical framework used to investigate the processes and outcomes of transforming the traditional activity and the implementation of a new model of activity: peer mediation. The empirical investigations show that as transformation of activity does or does not take place a number of type III conflicts between the new model of activity and existing elements of the traditional activity are enacted. For example, between the new social relations created by peer mediation and the existing division of labour for resolving conflicts (figure 8.5). At those schools where peer mediation has been successful and sustained these processes result in an expanded range of possible actions for individuals in conflict to choose from.

One of the challenges to using such models and similar theoretical schemes (e.g. Engestrom's 'contradiction's) in empirical investigations is the incessant movement within and between activities. For example, Engestrom (1998a) highlights that what was once an object may soon be transformed into an element of activity such as a new mediational tool or rule. The danger of such models of conflict is their imposition of fixed and rigid analytical concepts upon behaviour that is dynamic (Hedegaard 2001). In disputes, subjects may frequently change their perceptions of conflict (Cohen 1995, Putnam and Poole 1987). The source of conflict may also rapidly change. For example, a pupil who breaks a school rule may soon find him/her-self in conflict with a teacher. This conflict may be escalated not by the original issues but by the conduct of either agent

(Mitina 1990). This example illustrates the simultaneity of some conflicts. A type IV conflict between an individual choosing whether or not to break a rule can also be represented as a type III conflict between his/her actions and an element of an activity system. This may then result in a type I conflict between the pupil and a teacher responsible for upholding school rules.

Very delicate and intimate examination of conflicts involving individuals is needed to elucidate such models at a micro level of analysis. Given the practical difficulties of conducting research at this level of scrutiny, the analysis of empirical data uses the models of conflict to illustrate trends in social and individual transformation reported by pupils and teachers during interview. For example, the observation of children getting into fewer playground fights at some schools because they take their differences to peer mediation is expressed as a general trend in the reduction of type I conflicts (direct confrontations) and a shift in modality of conflict to type IV, where the conflict is reframed as choices between alternative courses of action. Greater understanding of psychological transformation would have perhaps been enabled by alternative methods of data collection discussed in the next section.

### **9.3 Methodologies**

The concepts and principles of CHAT informed the research design and analysis of empirical data undertaken within this thesis. A key aspect of methodology within CHAT is the study of human behaviour as it develops over time when interacting with familiar adults in familiar settings (Cole 1996). Scribner (Engestrom 1999a) explicates four critical steps in realising such a methodology: reconstruction of historical behaviour, observation of rudimentary behaviour, provocation of new behaviour and observation of new behaviour. Both stages of the empirical research design were informed by this approach. The first stage utilised Engestrom's (1999b, 1999c) theory of expansive learning to provide an account of an activity system under transformation in real time.

Expansive learning is clearly influenced by Scribner (Engestrom 1999a) and sets out a systematic progression through the four steps previously outlined. The second approach analysed these stages historically, investigating accounts of longstanding transformation at eight other schools, where peer mediation services had been implemented with mixed success in the past.

Upon critical reflection and in light of the resources available, stage two would have benefited from deeper analysis of transformation over historical time at a smaller number of schools rather than the superficial analysis achieved across a larger sample. Stage two placed too greater emphasis on maximising the sample as a means to achieving 'external validity' (Robson 1993). Miles and Huberman (1994) state that the strategy of just adding cases is a 'brute-force' approach, which yields little added value. Instead, Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest comparatory cases should be systematically selected. They should consider the degree to which they illustrate or contrast the original case, the extent to which they are typical or extreme for their genre and how they will help answer the research question. Stage two sacrificed depth of explanation and understanding to achieve a larger sample. An alternative approach would have been to conduct historical reconstruction of transformation (Engestrom 1999a) at contrasting schools, perhaps a school where peer mediation had been successful and sustained against another where it had not. Such an approach would also have allowed the collection of greater pupil interview data, illuminating in stage one but absent from stage two.

According to a number of evaluations of interventions (e.g. Farrington 2002, Medical Research Council 2000) research benefits from replication on smaller than larger random samples as a strategy for achieving external validity. However there is a tension, demonstrated to some degree by this thesis, between sample size and the quality of data achievable. For lone researchers, an increase in sample size usually means a decrease in the resources available for analysis at each site. For example, it is not practically possible to enter and investigate many activity systems undergoing transformation concurrently. CHAT posits that it is difficult to deduce causal relationships because of the dialectical nature of human activity, therefore understanding processes of transformation demands

detailed observation and description (Ratner 1997). Hence, maximising a sample places limitations upon the cultural-historical analysis possible. As much research using a CHAT framework places great emphasis on studying human development in authentic settings, there tends to be both an epistemological and practical inclination to study transformation at a few well-chosen sites, as in Engestrom's research (e.g. Engestrom 1993, 1999c, Engestrom et al 1997).

A number of sources of data were collected during both empirical enquires. Teachers from all schools completed 'Checkpoints' (Forum on Children and Violence 1999, appendix 1a) and 'school organisation and pedagogic practice' (Markham 1999, appendix 1b) questionnaires. Teachers and pupils were interviewed before, during and after the peer mediation training as part of stage one. The coordinators of peer mediation services at each of the eight schools included in the sample of stage two were interviewed once, at least two years after initial peer mediation training. Data was also supplemented by the administration of B-G Steem questionnaires (Maines and Robinson 1998) and Life in School Indices (Arora 1994, 1999) before, during and after peer mediation training in stage one. The former measured self-esteem and locus of control and the latter measured bullying and general aggression.

Whereas these methods provided some illuminating data, there was a gulf in quality between the information provided by interview data and other sources. Furthermore, some of the data collection tools used in both stages of the empirical research design can be criticised for allowing minimal cultural-historical analysis. As an illustration, consider the B-G Steem questionnaires (Maines and Robinson 1998, appendix 1a) administered before, during and after peer mediation training to ascertain whether the intervention was associated with any changes in pupils' self esteem or loci of control. The collection of these data can be criticised on a number of levels.

First, it is erroneous to assume that a direct relationship exists between peer mediation training and this outcome (Johnson and Johnson 1996). Coopersmith (1981) states that such complex phenomena are problematic to record and difficult to relate to interventions

at school because the most significant determinants of self-esteem are beyond their influence (e.g. family life). Second, it is erroneous to assume that such inputs as ‘peer mediation training’ and such outputs as ‘self-esteem’ can be reduced, quantified and expressed as independent and dependent ‘variables’ for correlation (Ratner 1997). In doing so, Ratner (1997) states a number of ontological and epistemological assumptions are made, which relate to a third criticism. These assumptions are i) that such matters as ‘having a best friend’ (question 19, appendix 1a) recorded by this questionnaire are tantamount to the psychological property of high self-esteem, and ii) that the recording of a greater number of these acts is statistically significant. The questionnaire offers participants no opportunity for cultural interpretation of the questions and the researcher little opportunity for cultural analysis of the data. Had self-esteem been an appropriate outcome of peer mediation training to measure, the correlation of scores from such rating scales against peer mediation training indicate little cultural or psychological significance if the principles for collecting data are flawed.

The data collected during both stages of empirical research design would have benefited from greater connection to CHAT and/or complementary data collection techniques. For example, in Engestrom’s (2002) analysis of transformation in school settings, he has conducted discourse analysis to elucidate how elements of activity have been re-conceptualised and reformulated after intervention. Greater lucidity regarding individual and psychological transformation could have been achieved by giving more careful thought and preparation to the type and format of interviews conducted with pupils and teachers during stage one. A strategy such as personal construct analysis (Smith 1995), described in section 7.7, may have enabled a greater understanding of how individual’s attitudes to and experiences of conflict changed over the intervention period.

## **9.4 Findings**

Concepts from CHAT including Engestrom’s (1999b) theory of expansive learning, Bernstein’s theory (2000) of cultural transmission, and the writer’s own models of conflict inform the analysis of several sources of data made in this study. The data



presented in this thesis suggests that the successful implementation of peer mediation services in schools transforms social relations to produce new mediational tools, which expand the range of possible actions actors in conflict are able to choose from. These findings can be summarised as:

1. Many pupils can acquire and use quite sophisticated conflict resolution skills, such as those used in peer mediation, if given sufficient training, trust and opportunity. Conflict resolution education should therefore be an educational priority as the development of such skills is both an attainable and essential life skill (QCA 1998).
2. The implementation of a peer mediation service transforms the social relations of the traditional activity. This process can be understood as a shift in the division of labour, in which teachers modify their perceptions of power and control to give pupils greater responsibilities. The new social relations created by peer mediation produce new mediational tools (e.g. the peer mediation script, appendix 4), which pupils can use to regulate their own conflicts.
3. The successful implementation of peer mediation services at a number of schools resulted in reported reductions in behavioural-interactional conflicts (type I, figure 5.1) and a shift in their modality from this type to conceptual conflicts (type IV, figure 5.3), where alternative courses of action were considered.
4. Peer mediation also resulted in a number of unexpected outcomes at several schools. One such outcome was a shift from 'coordination' to 'communication' (Engestrom et al 1997, see also figure 4.9) in the social relations between pupils trained as mediators. Other reported outcomes included gains in self-confidence, thinking and communicational skills amongst peer mediators, all of which would benefit from greater research.
5. These outcomes were most evident at schools where a number of cultural practices and processes were reported. These include schools where:
  - a. the principles of power and control underpinning the innovative activity of peer mediation, the traditional activity of conflict resolution and other related activities (e.g. behaviour management) were consistent,

- b. a 'critical mass' of key personnel at the school supported the innovative activity,
  - c. staff members were prepared to modify their perceptions of power and control in order to give pupils greater responsibilities,
  - d. staff members reproduced and distributed the new tools produced by the innovative activity in their own practice,
  - e. these new tools were given a high profile, and
  - f. there was attention to longstanding sustainability of the intervention and inclusion of the whole school community.
6. Schools and training agencies considering the implementation of peer mediation services should therefore take into account:
- a. the consistency between principles of power and control underpinning traditional and innovative models of activity,
  - b. whether there is sufficient support for the new model of activity,
  - c. the willingness of key personnel to modify their perceptions of power and control in order to reproduce and distribute the new social relations and tools produced by intervention, and
  - d. practical issues of long-term sustainability.

These findings suggest that the common lack of sustainability of interventions such as peer mediation (Visser et al 2000) can be explained by a school's failure to modify the traditional activity to incorporate the new rules, means of dividing labour and mediational tools produced. Perhaps such schools underestimate the degree to which principles of power and control underpinning the traditional activity have to be transformed in order for new models of activity to become normalised. These findings are supported by a survey of peer mediation services in London schools (Broadwood 2000). Broadwood (2000) states that a peer mediation service has to be compatible with a school's vision and its approach to regulating social relations. This is characterised by clear and consistent means for dealing with conflict, which are modelled by all teachers and reproduced in their management style. In light of these findings, those schools that implement initiatives as if they can be 'bolted upon' (McNamara 1995, Smith and

Thompson 1994, Stacey et al 1997) existing practice are unlikely to both sustain the initiative and reap any benefits without radical appraisal and transformation of the structure of relevant activities in school (Kenway and Fitzclarence 1997, Salisbury and Jackson 1994).

Those schools where peer mediation has been both successful and sustained for several years are underpinned by principles of power and control that translate social relations into the production of mediational tools, which pupils use to regulate their own conflicts. These social relations are characterised by a division of labour that gives pupils roles and responsibilities in assisting fellow pupils in finding their own mutually satisfying solutions to problems. As a result, the range of possible actions individuals in conflict learn and can choose from is 'expanded' (Engestrom 1999a).

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**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX 1A: CHECKPOINTS FOR SCHOOLS  
(FORUM ON CHILDREN AND VIOLENCE 1999)**















**APPENDIX 1B: QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT SCHOOL  
ORGANISATION AND PEDAGOGIC PRACTICE – PRIMARY  
(MARKHAM 1999)**

**QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT SCHOOL ORGANISATION AND PEDAGOGIC  
PRACTICE**

The reason for this questionnaire is to find out more about school organisation and pedagogic practice in your school.

Please follow the instructions for each question and answer according to what you believe happens in YOUR SCHOOL and in the classes that YOU TEACH.

Please answer all the questions.

The following section focuses on school organisation and school culture.

1. How well integrated are male pupils with female pupils in Year 5 in your school? Which of the following statements would best represent the situation for 9-10 year old pupils in your school?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) The school is a girls or a boys school so the genders are separated all the time. ☐
- b) The school is a girls or a boys school but some joint activities with other schools exist to enable girls and boys to co-operate in defined tasks. ☐
- c) The school is mixed gender but when particular subjects (e.g. PE and craft) and situations (e.g. the playground) allow, the girls and the boys are separated. ☐
- d) The school is mixed gender and the boys and girls are integrated all the time. ☐

2. How clearly are managerial responsibilities and authority stated in the junior section of your school?

PLEASE CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER

1      2      3      4      5

All managerial positions have clearly stated responsibilities and authority.

Apart from the distinction between headteacher and teachers, there are no clear publicly announced responsibilities. Responsibilities and authority tend to be associated with individuals rather than positions.

3. How do you think the teachers in the junior section of your school tend to work?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) They tend to work individually. ☐
- b) Most of the teachers work individually but there is some collaboration. ☐
- c) Much of the work is done in a team or teams but some work is done individually. ☐
- d) The teachers work largely in a team or teams. ☐



4. How would you describe the level of influence that staff have on the planning, development and evaluation of the school's approaches to the education of its pupils?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) The level of influence is low. On the whole the headteacher and senior management decides without consultation. ☐
- b) The level of influence is quite low. On the whole the headteacher and senior management decides but some input from staff is welcomed. ☐
- c) The level of influence is quite high. The staff are consulted but the headteacher and senior management tend to make the final decisions. ☐
- d) The level of influence is high as all the staff participate. ☐

5. How would you describe the level of influence that staff have on developing the school culture?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) The level of influence is low. On the whole the headteacher and senior management decides without consultation. ☐
- b) The level of influence is quite low. On the whole the headteacher and senior management decides but some input from staff is welcomed. ☐
- c) The level of influence is quite high. The staff are consulted but the headteacher and senior management tend to make the final decisions. ☐
- d) The level of influence is high as all the staff participate. ☐

The following section is about pedagogic practice and approaches to learning in your school. The following are descriptions of two equally valid types of teacher. Please read the descriptions and answer the questions that follow.

Type 1 Teacher.

- 1) Believes knowledge to exist in the form of a subject/discipline. This knowledge defines curriculum content and also criteria for assessment.
- 2) Values the learner's performance insofar as they conform to the criteria of the discipline.
- 3) Believes that they have an understanding of the skills and content that are defined by each of the subjects that they teach and their role as a teacher focuses on evaluation and correction of the learners performance.
- 4) Believes that an assessment of the learner's progress can be made by an objective evaluation.

Type 2 Teacher.

- 1) Believes that an understanding of each subject that they teach is based on an ability to organise thought and action.
- 2) Values the learners commitment to interpreting reality and believes that the criteria for understanding are determined as much by the learner as the teacher.
- 3) Perceives that their role as a teacher involves the setting up of a dialogue in which the learner can reshape their knowledge through interaction with others.
- 4) Perceives that the learners progress can be assessed by the learner who already possesses systematic and relevant knowledge and the means of reshaping that knowledge.
6. Please circle the number that best reflects your approach to teaching.

**1****2****3****4****5****Type 1  
teacher****Type 2  
teacher**

7. Please circle the number that you feel best reflects the approach to teaching taken by the majority of teachers in your school.

**1****2****3****4****5****Type 1  
teacher****Type 2  
teacher**

8. In your school, how often are 9-10 year old pupils put into groups according to ability?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) Never.
- b) Sometimes.
- c) Often.
- d) All the time, the pupils are streamed.

☐  
☐  
☐  
☐

9. In your school how much freedom do Year 5 teachers have over what they choose to teach? Which of the following statements do you feel is closest to the practice in your school.

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) Teachers are completely free to choose what they teach providing it meets the specifications of national curriculum. ☐
- b) Teachers are required to adhere to themes and subjects contained within a school developed curriculum but they are free to choose additional themes and activities that lie outside the school developed curriculum. ☐
- c) Teachers are required to adhere to the subjects, themes and activities that are laid out in a school developed curriculum that is contained within the national curriculum. ☐

10. How much influence do the Year 5 pupils have on the activities that they do? If you teach Year 5 pupils please think about your class(es) only.

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) I usually decide on the activities that the pupils are to undertake. ☐
- b) I usually decide on the activities for the pupils but the pupils have some input. ☐
- c) The pupils and I usually decide together on the activities. ☐
- d) I provide information on the themes but I encourage the pupils as much as possible to decide on the activities. ☐

11. How much influence do you think the Year 5 pupils have on the pacing and sequencing of the activities that they do? If you teach Year 5 pupils please think about your class(es) only.

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) I usually decide in which order the pupils should attempt the activities and the time scale. ☐
- b) The pupils have a little input but I usually decide in which order the activities should be done and the time scale. ☐
- c) The pupils and I usually decide together when the activities should be done and in which order they should be done. ☐
- d) I encourage the pupils as much as possible to decide in which order and how quickly the activities should be done. ☐

12. How do Year 5 pupils tend to work in your school? Which of the following statements do you feel is closest to the most common practice in your school for teaching 9-10 year olds? If you teach Year 5 pupils please think about your class(es) only.

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) Pupils work in groups and as individuals and pursue different tasks. ☐
- b) Pupils work in groups and as individuals and pursue similar tasks. ☐
- c) Pupils work as individuals but on different tasks. ☐
- d) Pupils work as individuals but on the same tasks. ☐

13. In your school, how would you describe the ability and willingness of Year 5 pupils to take part in group work, group discussions and role plays? If you teach Year 5 pupils please think about your class(es) only.

PLEASE CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER

- |   |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5  |
| On the whole, the levels of skill and willingness are very high |   |   |   | On the whole, the levels of skill and willingness are very low |
| 6   |   |   |   |  |
| Don't know  |   |   |   |  |

14. In Year 5 classes, how often are intended themes used to link together curriculum subjects? If you teach Year 5 pupils please think about your class(es) only.

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) There are no intended themes that link curriculum subjects. ☐
- b) There are a few intended themes that link curriculum subjects. ☐
- c) There are many intended themes that link curriculum themes. ☐
- d) All the curriculum subjects are integrated and linked together by the themes ☐

15. In one academic year, how often would Year 5 teachers work together in the planning, delivery and evaluation of intended themes that link curriculum subjects?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) Never
- b) More than never but no more than twice
- c) More than twice but less than five times
- d) Five or more times
- e) Don't know

☐  
☐  
☐  
☐  
☐

15. How would you describe the commitment in your school to cross curriculum work in year 8?

PLEASE CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER

- |  |          |          |          |   |
|--|----------|----------|----------|---|
| <b>1</b>   | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b>  |
| The school is very strongly committed to cross curriculum work |          |          |          | Cross curriculum work has a low priority and status |

16. What level of learning associated is with cross curriculum work in Year 5 in your school?

PLEASE CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER

- |   |            |          |          |  |
|---|------------|----------|----------|--|
| <b>1</b>  | <b>2</b>   | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b>   |
| Cross curriculum work may be associated with all levels of attainment |            |          |          | Cross curriculum work is only associated with low levels of attainment |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>7</b>   |          |          |  |
| There is no cross curriculum work in Year 8                           | Don't know |          |          |  |

The following section is about relationships between the school and the wider community including parents. Question 17 deals with what you would like to be the case and question 18 deals with what is the case.

17. In one academic year, how many research and/or development projects would your school WISH to be involved in (including pedagogic development work within the school or connected with other institutes such as the Local Authority Education Department or a University)?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| a) No projects.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Up to two projects.                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) More than two projects but not more than five projects. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) More than five projects.                                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Don't know  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

18. In one academic year How many projects is your school ACTUALLY involved in (including pedagogic development work within the school or connected with other institutes such as the Local Authority Education Department or a University)?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- |  |                          |
|--|--------------------------|
| a) No projects.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) Up to two projects.                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| c) More than two projects but not more than five projects. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| d) More than five projects.                                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) Don't know  | <input type="checkbox"/> |

19. How would you describe your schools' approach to the local media?

PLEASE CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER

- | 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The school actively seeks to develop informal links with the local media in order to promote the school |   |   |   | The school tries to avoid the local media |

20. How easy is it for parents to gain access to teachers in your school? Which of the following statements do you feel is closest to the practice in your school?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) Parents can gain direct access to teachers without the consent or intervention of the headteacher or senior teachers. ☐
- b) Apart from organised occasions when parents are formally invited to the school, parents can only gain access to the teachers via the senior teachers. ☐
- c) Apart from organised occasions when parents are formally invited to the school, parents can only access teachers via the senior teachers and can only see the teacher when a senior teacher is also present. ☐
- d) Parents have very little or no contact with the staff. They can only access teachers and headteachers on specific occasions that have been organised by the school. ☐

21. How many parents do you feel positively support the work and efforts of your school?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) Only a few. ☐
- b) Some but less than a half. ☐
- c) More than a half. ☐
- d) All or almost all of them do. ☐

22. In your school, how high is the degree of co-operation between parents and teachers, both at meetings and on a general level?

PLEASE CIRCLE THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER

- |  |          |          |   |          |
|--|----------|----------|---|----------|
| <b>1</b>                                     | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b>                                      | <b>5</b> |
| The degree of co-operation is generally low. |          |          | The degree of co-operation is generally high. |          |

The following section focuses on the relationships between staff

23. How are staff rooms used in your school? Which of the following statements do you feel is closest to the practice in your school?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) All teachers including the headteacher share one staff room only. ☐
- b) There are several staff rooms that anyone can use. ☐
- c) Some sections (e.g. according to status or age of pupils that the teachers teach) have their own staffroom but there is also a common staffroom which all staff tend to use. ☐
- d) All or some sections have their own staffroom which staff tend to use rather than the staffroom that is common to all. ☐
- e) There are no formal staff room facilities for staff. ☐

24. When staff meet informally in your staff room (during break and lunch time but not during official meetings) do the discussions focus mostly on non-school matters or on pedagogic and pupil welfare issues?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) Usually on non-school matters. ☐
- b) They discuss both but tend to focus slightly more on non-school matters. ☐
- c) They discuss both but tend to focus slightly more on pedagogic and pupil welfare issues. ☐
- d) Usually on pedagogic and pupil welfare issues. ☐

The following section focuses on school rules from a pupil's point of view.

25. What is the school's policy regarding school uniform? Which of the following statements do you feel is closest to the practice in your school?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- a) There is a strict dress code for the pupils. ☐
- b) There are clear guidelines for what pupils should wear but there is slight variation on this theme which all pupils adhere to. ☐
- c) Some pupils wear clothes that adhere to the guidelines of the school whereas others wear whatever they like within reason. ☐
- d) Pupils can wear whatever they like within reason. ☐



26. How would your school respond to the discovery that a Year 6 pupil was carrying illegal drugs for the first time?

PLEASE TICK ONE BOX

- The pupil would be automatically permanently excluded. ☐
- The pupil would be automatically excluded on a fixed term basis. ☐
- The pupil may or may not be excluded as the implementation of the exclusion policy is variable. ☐
- The school would not exclude a pupil if it was the first time but would apply other sanctions. ☐
- Don't know ☐

27. Do you teach Year 5 pupils? If you do, in which capacity do you teach them?

.....

.....

.....

28. Are you the Head?

- Yes ☐
- No ☐

29. How long have you been teaching?

.....

30. Are there any comments that you would like to make about the questionnaire? (e.g. are the questions relevant to you and to schools in England, were the questions clear, easy to understand, were the response options appropriate, were the instructions easy to follow, is the question order appropriate.)

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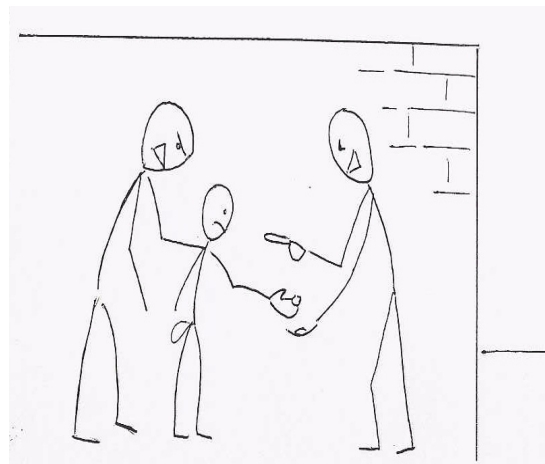
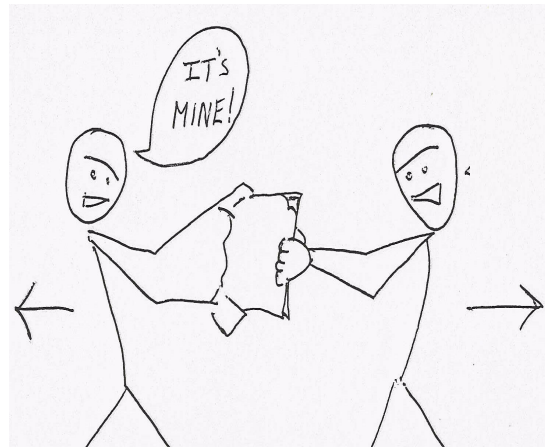
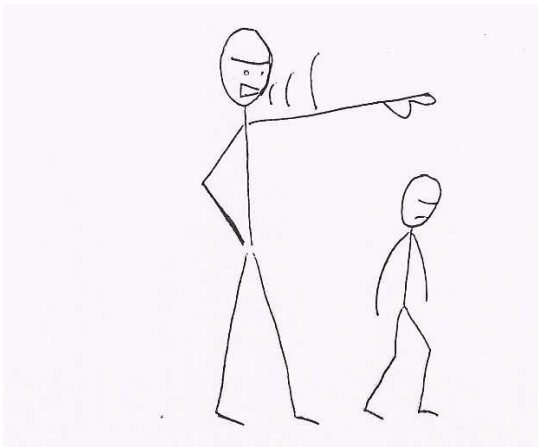
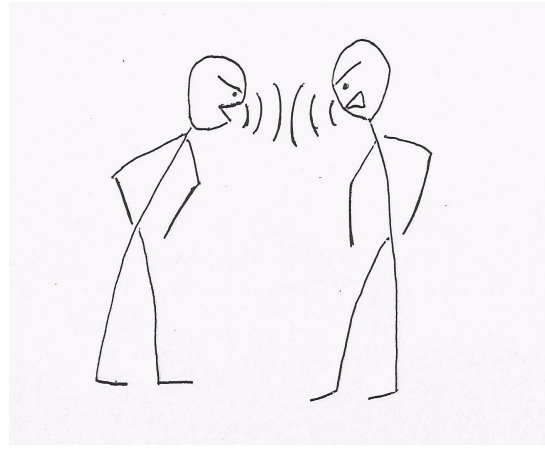
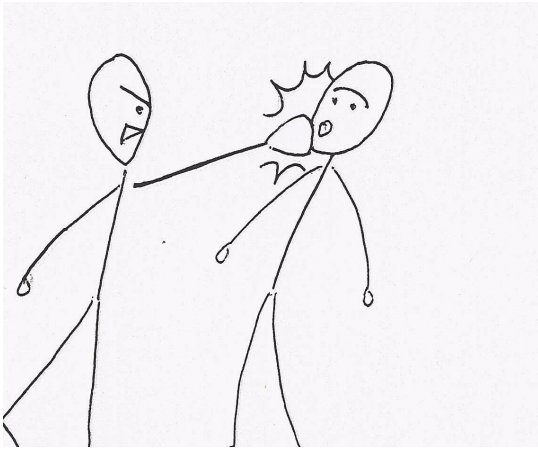
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**END OF QUESTIONNAIRE**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP**

**APPENDIX 2: CONFLICT CARTOONS**



### **APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULES**

- a) Pre-intervention questions for pupils
- b) Post-intervention questions for pupils
- c) Post-intervention questions for staff
- d) Post-intervention questions for lunchtime supervisors
- e) Post-intervention questions for trainers
- f) Post-intervention questions for staff at comparatory case studies

**Appendix 3a: Pre-Intervention Questions for Pupils**

Interviewee:

Yr./class:

To be used in conjunction with conflict cartoons. Each interviewee to choose the card they experience most often to talk about. The matrix below is to be used to record their comments and to prompt any further information required. Tell each pupil beforehand that I want to find out some information about conflict, remind him or her to answer personally and that these comments will be kept confidential. All responses to be tape recorded and transcribed.

	Conflict Card Chosen:
Frequency:	
Where/ when?	
What about?	
What happened?	
How did it feel?	
How was it resolved?	
How do you like conflicts to end?	
Other comments:	

### **Appendix 3b: Post-Intervention Questions for Pupils**

Interviewee:

Date:

“This interview will be taped but is strictly confidential.”

#### **Those interviewed previously about conflicts at school:**

“Last time I interviewed you I asked you to choose a card to talk about and you chose this one \_\_\_\_\_. I’d like us to talk about this again.”

1. How often would you say you get into this type of conflict? (Daily/Weekly/Less than weekly)
2. What reasons might cause this conflict? What happens next?
3. In what ways do you resolve this conflict?
4. Have you used the peer mediation scheme? If yes: In what ways was it useful? What would have happened if you had not gone? Would you use it again? In what ways could it be improved?

#### **Yr. 3, 4 pupils trained as a client group:**

5. What was the most enjoyable thing about circle time sessions? What was the least enjoyable thing about circle time sessions?
6. What were the differences and similarities of circle time sessions to ordinary lessons?
7. Was other children’s behaviour in class different to circle-time? What were the differences and why?
8. Did your teacher do anything different in circle time to ordinary lessons? What were the differences and why?
9. Have you noticed anybody change because of circle time? Who, how and why?

10. Do you think you have changed any of your feelings about yourself since the circle time sessions started? In what ways and why?
11. Do you think you have changed any of your feelings about others in your class since the circle time sessions started? In what ways and why?
12. Have you used the peer mediation scheme? If yes: In what ways was it useful? What would have happened if you had not gone? Would you use it again? In what ways could it be improved?

**Yr. 5, trained as peer mediators.**

Same questions as yr.3, 4 and ...

13. What was the most and least enjoyable things about the two training days?
14. What was the most useful thing that you learned on the training days? Why?
15. What was the least useful thing that you learned on the training days? Why?
16. What kinds of conflict did you experience before and after the training? In what ways have you resolved these conflicts before and after training? Has this changed, how and why?
17. What are your feelings about being a peer mediator?
18. Has being a peer mediator changed you in any ways? What have you learned from mediating others?
19. Have you changed anything about the way that you think about yourself since the training? How? My data suggests that your self-esteem went up/down during training. Does this surprise you? Why?
20. Do you think that boys or girls learned the most from the training? Why? My data suggests that girls in your class learned more from the sessions and bullying to girls has since decreased. Does this surprise you? Why?
21. What do you think of the way the peer mediation project has been set up and used? Are there any things that should be changed?

### **Appendix 3c: Post-Intervention Questions for Staff**

Interviewee:

Date:

“This interview will be taped but is strictly confidential.”

#### **Background:**

1. What are the different approaches to teaching at Brierley Hill Primary School? Where do you fit on this spectrum? Would you be the same at a different school?
2. How would you describe the pattern of behaviour over the past academic school year? What might have caused these changes?

#### **The training received by your class:**

3. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the training sessions your class received?
4. Have you noticed any changes in: a) individual pupils, b) the class, c) playground behaviour, d) teachers and e) the school in general? What might have caused these?
5. What were the differences and similarities between the training sessions and a) your approach to teaching, b) the culture of the school and c) other initiatives?
6. Do you think any pupil's self-esteem went up or down as a result of the training? Why?
7. My data suggests that ABC's self esteem went up whilst XYZ's went down over the intervention period. Does this surprise you? Why?
8. Do you think that experiences of bullying have changed for members of your class? Who? How? Why?
9. My data suggests that the bullying index for girls went down but remained constant for boys over the intervention period. Does this surprise you? Why?

**The peer mediation project:**

*Setting up:*

10. How has the peer mediation scheme been a) set up and b) promoted/maintained?
11. What problems has the project experienced? In what ways could the setting up have been improved?

*Impact:*

12. What do you think were the strengths and weaknesses of the project design? Was it appropriate to the needs of the school? How and why? Was the training received by the most appropriate group(s)? Why?
13. How well has peer mediation been used? Have you observed any changes as a result of the project? What? Why might this have happened?
14. Has the frequency/nature of pupil-pupil conflicts changed over the intervention period? In what ways? Why?
15. What are your experiences of teacher-pupil conflicts before and after the intervention? How have you resolved teacher-pupil conflicts before and after the intervention? Any changes? Why?
16. In what ways have other staff and lunchtime supervisors responded to the project? Has this been supportive? Why?
17. In what ways have parents responded to the project? Has this been supportive? Why?

*The future:*

18. Have school procedures or approaches to behaviour management changed as a result of the project? In what ways? Why?
19. Will the peer mediation project be maintained? How? Why?
20. Will the school's policy or budget be influenced by the project? How? Why?



### **Appendix 3d: Post-Intervention Questions for Lunchtime Supervisors**

Interviewee:

Date:

“This interview will be taped but is strictly confidential.”

1. In what ways do you handle pupils in conflict? What are the differences and similarities between your approach and teachers at your school?
2. How has the peer mediation scheme been a) set up and b) promoted/maintained? Could this have been improved in any ways?
3. What appear to be the strengths and weaknesses of the peer mediation project?
4. How well has peer mediation been used? Have you observed any changes as a result of the project? What? Why might this have happened?
5. Would you like to see the peer mediation project maintained? How? Why? Any changes?

### **Appendix 3e: Post-Intervention Questions for Trainers**

Interviewee:

Date:

“This interview will be taped but is strictly confidential.”

1. Describe your role with the project and previous experience? What would I see in one of your training sessions?
2. What influences do you draw upon in your approach to conflict resolution work in schools?
3. How does this compare to the Quaker philosophy of the project?
4. Describe your most and least successful projects.
5. What were the differences between the two?
6. What have you witnessed as the differences between schools that maintain and do not maintain successful projects?
7. With which pupils has the project worked best? Who has it experienced difficulties with? Why might this be? My data...

Specific to the single case study:

8. What were the a) strengths and b) weaknesses of the project?
9. How did your approach to conflict resolution compare to the classroom teacher's at this school? At other schools?

Please list the schools at which you have delivered peer mediation training:

### **Appendix 3f: Post-Intervention Questions for Staff at Comparatory Case Studies**

Interviewee:

School:

Date:

“This interview will be taped but is strictly confidential.”

#### **Background:**

1. What are the different approaches to teaching at your school? Where do you fit on this spectrum? Would you be the same at a different school?
2. Please describe the training given at your school. (Recipients, period, type of training).
3. Who made the decision to employ the project? What were the reasons for employing the project?
4. What do you think were the strengths and weaknesses of the project design? Was it appropriate to the needs of the school? How and why? Was the training received by the most appropriate group(s)? Why?

#### **The training received by your class:**

5. What were the strengths and weaknesses of the training sessions your class received?
6. Have you noticed any changes in: a) individual pupils, b) the class, c) playground behaviour, d) teachers and e) the school in general? What might have caused these?
7. Which pupils responded most successfully to the training? Who did it experience any difficulties with? Why?
8. What were the differences and similarities between the training sessions and a) your approach to teaching, b) the culture of the school and c) other initiatives at your school?

**The peer mediation project:**

*Setting up:*

9. How was the peer mediation scheme a) set up and b) promoted/maintained?
10. What problems did the project experience? In what ways could the setting up have been improved?

*Impact:*

11. How well has peer mediation service been used by other classes? Have you observed any changes as a result of the project? What? Why might this have happened?
12. Has the frequency/nature of pupil-pupil conflicts changed over the intervention period? In what ways? Why?
13. With which pupils has the peer mediation service been most successful? Who has it experienced difficulties with? Why?
14. What are your experiences of teacher-pupil conflicts before and after the intervention? How have you resolved teacher-pupil conflicts before and after the intervention? Any changes? Why?
15. In what ways have other staff and lunchtime supervisors responded to the project? Has this been supportive? Why?
16. In what ways have parents responded to the project? Has this been supportive? Why?

*The future:*

17. Have school procedures or approaches to behaviour management changed as a result of the project? In what ways? Why?
18. Will the peer mediation project continue to be maintained? How? Why?
19. Has the school's policy or budget been influenced by the project? How? Why?

**APPENDIX 4: PEER MEDIATION SCRIPT**

Peer Mediator 1	Peer Mediator 2
<p>Hello. Do you both want to mediate?</p> <p>Mediators listen and help you sort out your problem. We do not take sides, we will help you find a solution but we won't tell you what to do. We won't tell other students your secrets.</p> <p>What is the problem? So this is what happened... Have I understood?</p> <p>How did you feel? So you felt...</p> <p>How is ___ feeling? So ___ felt...</p> <p>Just to remind you. We won't tell You what to do but we will help You find your own solution.</p> <p>What do you want to sort this out? So you would like...</p> <p>Can you agree to this? <b>(If not: What changes would you like ___ to make? ...and repeat question)</b></p> <p>Thank you for working together to solve this problem successfully.</p>	<p>What are your names? My name is...and this is...</p> <p>Please use these rules: please use other people's names, do not use put downs, do not blame the other person and please listen to each other without interrupting. You both must want to solve the problem. Do you both agree to these rules?</p> <p>What is the problem? So this is what happened... Have I understood?</p> <p>How did you feel? So you felt...</p> <p>How is ___ feeling? So ___ felt...</p> <p>What do you want to sort this out? So you would like...</p> <p>Can you agree to this? <b>(If not: What changes would you like ___ to make? ...and repeat question)</b></p> <p>Please come back to peer mediation next time you have a problem.</p>

## APPENDIX 5: SELF-ESTEEM/LOCUS OF CONTROL QUESTIONNAIRE (MAINES AND ROBINSON 1998)

	Question	Category	Answer required to score 1 point
1.	Is your school work good?	Self-esteem	YES
2.	Do you like being a boy/girl?	Self-esteem	YES
3.	Are you strong and healthy?	Self-esteem	YES
4.	Does someone else always choose what you wear?	Locus of control	NO
5.	Do your parents think you behave well?	Self-esteem	YES
6.	Do children like playing with you?	Self-esteem	YES
7.	Are you very nice looking?	Self-esteem	YES
8.	Are you as clever as other children?	Self-esteem	YES
9.	Does the teacher notice when you work hard?	Locus of control	YES
10.	Are you a fast runner?	Self-esteem	YES
11.	Can you make your work better if you really try?	Locus of control	YES
12.	Are you a good reader?	Self-esteem	YES
13.	Are you good at looking after yourself?	Self-esteem	YES
14.	Does your Mum or Dad like you to help them?	Self-esteem	YES
15.	Do you choose your friends?	Locus of control	YES
16.	Do you have a best friend?	Self-esteem	YES
17.	Is your teacher pleased with your work?	Self-esteem	YES
18.	Do you need a lot of help?	Self-esteem	NO
19.	Are your parents usually fair?	Self-esteem	YES
20.	Do you often get the blame when it is not your fault?	Locus of control	NO
21.	Do you find sums hard?	Self-esteem	NO
22.	Do you have nice clothes?	Self-esteem	YES
23.	Do other people decide everything about your life?	Locus of control	NO
24.	Are you the best looking in your class?	Self-esteem	YES
25.	Are your parents proud of you?	Self-esteem	YES
26.	Do you think that wishing can make nice things happen?	Locus of control	YES
27.	Would you like to be someone else?	Self-esteem	NO

**APPENDIX 6: LIFE IN SCHOOL INDEX (ARORA 1994)**





